ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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MAY

...e Hour
...aire Ziliouk
...e Mystery of the Blue Jar
...e Nail and the Requiem
...e Man Who Dreamed Too Much
...e Man Who Read Too Many Detective Stories
...e Doctor and the Lunatic
...r. and Mrs. Abbey's Difficulties
...e Man in the Velvet Hat
...bin B-13

DASHIELL HAMMETT
GEORGES SIMENON
AGATHA CHRISTIE
C. DALY KING
QUENTIN REYNOLDS
HENRY HASSE
RICHARD CONNELL
E. M. FORSTER
JEROME and HAROLD PRINCE
JOHN DICKSON CARR

...ANTHOLOGY OF THE BEST DETECTIVE STORIES, NEW AND OLD

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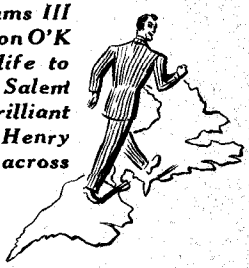
This is Don O'K

he's Donald O'Keefe Adams III in his native Boston, and Don O'K South of the Rio Grande. He has devoted his life to hemisphere solidarity. Product of generations of Salem traders, educated at Harvard and Groton, a brilliant industrialist — on a clear day this combination Henry Kaiser-Sumner Welles can see five thousand miles across the Panama Canal.

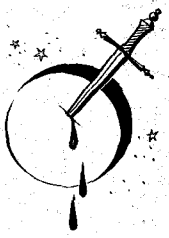


This is Sancho

faithful companion, bodyguard to Don O'K. A full-blooded Lengua Indian (native of Paraguay) who speaks only Basic English and makes an art of it, Sancho is insufferably proud of his North American tailoring, but at the first smell of danger, he steps out of his Brooks Brothers shoes and reverts to the stalking genius of his ancestors.

This is the Book

THE MOON WAS RED is the story of how these two unique men grapple with murder. Background is Bolivia, and the author provides an inside, non-tourist round trip, which, incidentally, helps explain the recent political headlines. All Good Neighbors will pass along the tip to read



THE MOON WAS RED

by Dana Sage

AN INNER SANCTUM MYSTERY · PRICE $2.50

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ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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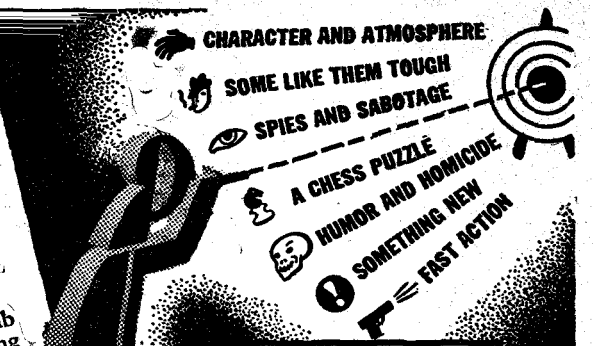

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Follow the trail of the Continental Op — but hold on to your hat!

ONE HOUR

by DASHIELL HAMMETT

"THIS is Mr. Chrostwaite," Vance Richmond said.

Chrostwaite, wedged between the arms of one of the attorney's large chairs, grunted what was perhaps meant for an acknowledgment of the introduction. I grunted back at him, and found myself a chair.

He was a big balloon of a man — this Chrostwaite — in a green plaid suit that didn't make him look any smaller than he was. His tie was a gaudy thing, mostly of yellow, with a big diamond set in the center of it, and there were more stones on his pudgy hands. Spongy fat blurred his features, making it impossible for his round purplish face to ever hold any other expression than the discontented hoggishness that was habitual to it. He reeked of gin.

"Mr. Chrostwaite is the Pacific Coast agent for the Mutual Fire Extinguisher Manufacturing Company," Vance Richmond began, as soon as I had got myself seated. "His office is on Kearny Street, near California. Yesterday, at about two-forty-five in the afternoon, he went to his office, leaving his machine — a Hudson touring car — standing in front, with the engine running. Ten minutes later, he came out. The car was gone."

I looked at Chrostwaite. He was looking at his fat knees, showing not the least interest in what his attorney was saying. I looked quickly back at Vance Richmond; his clean grey face and lean figure were downright beautiful beside his bloated client.

"A man named Newhouse," the lawyer was saying, "who was the proprietor of a printing establishment on California Street, just around the corner from Mr. Chrostwaite's office, was run down and killed by Mr. Chrostwaite's car at the corner of

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Clay and Kearny Streets, five minutes after Mr. Chrostwaite had left the car to go into his office. The police found the car shortly afterward, only a block away from the scene of the accident — on Montgomery near Clay.

"The thing is fairly obvious. Some one stole the car immediately after Mr. Chrostwaite left it; and in driving rapidly away, ran down Newhouse; and then, in fright, abandoned the car. But here is Mr. Chrostwaite's position; three nights ago, while driving perhaps a little recklessly out —"

"Drunk," Chrostwaite said, not looking up from his plaid knees; and though his voice was hoarse, husky — it was the hoarseness of a whisky-burnt throat — there was no emotion in his voice.

"While driving perhaps a little recklessly out Van Ness Avenue," Vance Richmond went on, ignoring the interruption, "Mr. Chrostwaite knocked a pedestrian down. The man wasn't badly hurt, and he is being compensated very generously for his injuries. But we are to appear in court next Monday to face a charge of reckless driving, and I am afraid that this accident of yesterday, in which the printer was killed, may hurt us.

"No one thinks that Mr. Chrostwaite was in his car when it killed the printer — we have a world of evidence that he wasn't. But I am afraid that the printer's death may be made a weapon against us when we appear on the Van Ness Avenue charge. Being an attorney, I know just how much capital the prosecuting attorney — if he so chooses — can make out of the really insignificant fact that the same car that knocked down the man on Van Ness Avenue killed another man yesterday. And, being an attorney, I know how likely the prosecuting attorney is to so choose. And he can handle it in such a way that we will be given little or no opportunity to tell our side.

"The worst that can happen, of course, is that, instead of the usual fine, Mr. Chrostwaite will be sent to the city jail for thirty or sixty days. That is bad enough, however, and that is what we wish to —"

Chrostwaite spoke again, still regarding his knees.

"Damned nuisance!" he said.

"That is what we wish to avoid," the attorney continued. "We are willing to pay a stiff fine, and expect to, for the accident on Van Ness Avenue was clearly Mr. Chrostwaite's fault. But we —"

"Drunk as a lord!" Chrostwaite said.

"But we don't want to have this other accident, with which we had

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nothing to do, given a false weight in connection with the slighter accident. What we want, then, is to find the man or men who stole the car and ran down John Newhouse. If they are apprehended before we go to court, we won't be in danger of suffering for their act. Think you can find them before Monday?"

"I'll try," I promised; "though it isn't —"

The human balloon interrupted me by heaving himself to his feet, fumbling with his fat jeweled fingers for his watch.

"Three o'clock," he said. "Got a game of golf for three-thirty." He picked up his hat and gloves from the desk. "Find 'em, will you? Damned nuisance going to jail!"

And he waddled out.

From the attorney's office, I went down to the Hall of Justice, and, after hunting around a few minutes, found a policeman who had arrived at the corner of Clay and Kearny Streets a few seconds after Newhouse had been knocked down.

"I was just leaving the Hall when I seen a bus scoot around the corner at Clay Street," this patrolman — a big sandy-haired man named Coffee — told me. "Then I seen people gathering around, so I went up there and found this John Newhouse stretched out. He was already dead. Half a dozen people had seen him hit, and one of 'em had got the license number of the car that done it. We found the car standing empty just around the corner on Montgomery Street, pointing north. They was two fellows in the car when it hit Newhouse, but nobody saw what they looked like. Nobody was in it when we found it."

"In what direction was Newhouse walking?"

"North along Kearny Street, and he was about three-quarters across Clay when he was knocked. The car was coming north on Kearny, too, and turned east on Clay. It mightn't have been all the fault of the fellows in the car — according to them that seen the accident. Newhouse was walking across the street looking at a piece of paper in his hand. I found a piece of foreign money — paper money — in his hand, and I guess that's what he was looking at. The lieutenant tells me it was Dutch money — a hundred-florin note, he says."

"Found out anything about the men in the car?"

"Nothing! We lined up everybody we could find in the neighborhood of California and Kearny Streets — where the car was stolen from — and around Clay and Montgomery Streets — where it was left at. But nobody remembered seeing the fellows get-

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ting in it or getting out of it. The man that owns the car wasn't driving it — it was stole all right, I guess. At first I thought maybe they was something shady about the accident. This John Newhouse had a two- or three-day-old black eye on him. But we run that out and found that he had an attack of heart trouble or something a couple days ago, and fell, fetching his eye up against a chair. He'd been home sick for three days — just left his house half an hour or so before the accident."

"Where'd he live?"

"On Sacramento Street — way out. I got his address here somewhere."

He turned over the pages of a grimy memoranda book, and I got the dead man's house number, and the names and addresses of the witnesses to the accident that Coffee had questioned.

That exhausted the policeman's information, so I left him.

My next play was to canvass the vicinity of where the car had been stolen and where it had been deserted, and then interview the witnesses. The fact that the police had fruitlessly gone over this ground made it unlikely that I would find anything of value; but I couldn't skip these things on that account. Ninety-nine per cent of detective work is a patient collecting of details — and your details must be got as nearly first-hand as possible, regardless of who else has worked the territory before you.

Before starting on this angle, however, I decided to run around to the dead man's printing establishment — only three blocks from the Hall of Justice — and see if any of his employees had heard anything that might help me.

Newhouse's establishment occupied the ground floor of a small building on California, between Kearny and Montgomery. A small office was partitioned off in front, with a connecting doorway leading to the press-room in the rear.

The only occupant of the small office, when I came in from the street, was a short, stocky, worried-looking blond man of forty or thereabouts, who sat at the desk in his shirt sleeves, checking off figures in a ledger, against others on a batch of papers before him.

I introduced myself, telling him that I was a Continental Detective Agency operative, interested in Newhouse's death. He told me his name was Ben Soules, and that he was Newhouse's foreman. We shook hands, and then he waved me to a chair across the desk; pushed back the papers and book upon which he had been working, and scratched his

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head disgustedly with the pencil in his hand.

"This is awful!" he said. "What with one thing and another, we're heels over head in work, and I got to fool with these books that I don't know anything at all about, and —"

He broke off to pick up the telephone, which had jingled.

"Yes. . . . This is Soules. . . . We're working on them now . . . I'll give 'em to you by Monday noon at the least. . . . I know we promised them for yesterday, but . . . I know! I know! But the boss's death set us back. Explain that to Mr. Chrostwaite. And . . . And I'll promise you that we'll give them to you Monday morning, sure!"

Soules slapped the receiver irritably on its hook and looked at me.

"You'd think that since it was his own car that killed the boss, he'd have decency enough not to squawk over the delay!"

"Chrostwaite?"

"Yes — that was one of his clerks. We're printing some leaflets for him — promised to have 'em ready yesterday — but between the boss's death and having a couple new hands to break in, we're behind with everything. I been here eight years, and this is the first time we ever fell down on an order — and every damned customer is yelling his head off. If we were like most printers they'd be used to waiting; but we've been too good to them. But this Chrostwaite! You'd think he'd have some decency, seeing that his car killed the boss!"

I nodded sympathetically, slid a cigar across the desk, and waited until it was burning in Soules' mouth before I asked:

"You said something about having a couple new hands to break in. How come?"

"Yes. Mr. Newhouse fired two of our printers last week — Fincher and Key. He found that they belonged to the I. W. W., so he gave them their time."

"Any trouble with them, or anything against them except that they were Wobblies?"

"No — they were pretty good workers."

"Any trouble with them after he fired them?" I asked.

"No real trouble, though they were pretty hot. They made speeches all over the place before they left."

"Remember what day that was?"

"Wednesday of last week, I think. Yes, Wednesday, because I hired two new men on Thursday."

"How many men do you work?"

"Three, besides myself."

"Was Mr. Newhouse sick very often?"

"Not sick enough to stay away very often, though every now and

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then his heart would go back on him, and he'd have to stay in bed for a week or ten days. He wasn't what you could call real well at any time. He never did anything but the office work — I run the shop."

"When was he taken sick this last time?"

"Mrs. Newhouse called up Tuesday morning and said he had had another spell, and wouldn't be down for a few days. He came in yesterday — which was Thursday — for about ten minutes in the afternoon, and said he would be back on the job this morning. He was killed just after he left."

"How did he look — very sick?"

"Not so bad. He never looked well, of course, but I couldn't see much difference from usual yesterday. This last spell hadn't been as bad as most, I reckon — he was usually laid up for a week or more."

"Did he say where he was going when he left? The reason I ask is that, living out on Sacramento Street, he would naturally have taken a car at that street if he had been going home, whereas he was run down on Clay Street."

"He said he was going up to Portsmouth Square to sit in the sun for half an hour or so. He had been cooped up indoors for two or three days, he said, and he wanted some sunshine before he went back home."

"He had a piece of foreign money in his hand when he was hit. Know anything about it?"

"Yes. He got it here. One of our customers — a man named Van Pelt — came in to pay for some work we had done yesterday afternoon while the boss was here. When Van Pelt pulled out his wallet to pay his bill, this piece of Holland money — I don't know what you call it — was among the bills. I think he said it was worth something like thirty-eight dollars. Anyway, the boss took it, giving Van Pelt his change. The boss said he wanted to show the Holland money to his boys — and he could have it changed back into American money later."

"Who is this Van Pelt?"

"He's a Hollander — is planning to open a tobacco importing business here in a month or two. I don't know much about him outside of that."

"Where's his home, or office?"

"His office is on Bush Street, near Sansome."

"Did he know that Newhouse had been sick?"

"I don't think so. The boss didn't look much different from usual."

"What's this Van Pelt's full name?"

"Hendrik Van Pelt."

"What does he look like?"

Before Soules could answer, three

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evenly spaced buzzes sounded above the rattle and whirring of the presses in the back of the shop.

I slid the muzzle of my gun — I had been holding it in my lap for five minutes — far enough over the edge of the desk for Ben Soules to see it.

"Put both of your hands on top of the desk," I said.

He put them there.

The press-room door was directly behind him, so that, facing him across the desk, I could look over his shoulder at it. His stocky body served to screen my gun from the view of whoever came through the door, in response to Soules' signal.

I didn't have long to wait.

Three men — black with ink — came to the door, and through it into the little office. They strolled in careless and casual, laughing and joking to one another.

But one of them licked his lips as he stepped through the door. Another's eyes showed white circles all around the irises. The third was the best actor — but he held his shoulders a trifle too stiffly to fit his otherwise careless carriage.

"Stop right there!" I barked at them when the last one was inside the office — and I brought my gun up where they could see it.

They stopped as if they had all been mounted on the same pair of legs.

I kicked my chair back, and stood up.

I didn't like my position at all. The office was entirely too small for me. I had a gun, true enough, and whatever weapons may have been distributed among these other men were out of sight. But these four men were too close to me; and a gun isn't a thing of miracles. It's a mechanical contraption that is capable of just so much and no more.

If these men decided to jump me, I could down just one of them before the other three were upon me. I knew it, and they knew it.

"Put your hands up," I ordered, "and turn around!"

None of them moved to obey. One of the inked men grinned wickedly; Soules shook his head slowly; the other two stood and looked at me.

I was more or less stumped. You can't shoot a man just because he refuses to obey an order — even if he is a criminal. If they had turned around for me, I could have lined them up against the wall, and, being behind them, have held them safe while I used the telephone.

But that hadn't worked.

My next thought was to back across the office to the street door, keeping them covered, and then either stand in the door and yell for help, or take them into the street, where I could handle them. But I

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put that thought away as quickly as it came to me.

These four men were going to jump me — there was no doubt of that. All that was needed was a spark of any sort to explode them into action. They were standing stiff-legged and tense, waiting for some move on my part. If I took a step backward — the battle would be on.

We were close enough for any of the four to have reached out and touched me. One of them I could shoot before I was smothered — one out of four. That meant that each of them had only one chance out of four of being the victim — low enough odds for any but the most cowardly of men.

I grinned what was supposed to be a confident grin — because I was up against it hard — and reached for the telephone: I had to do something! Then I cursed myself! I had merely changed the signal for the onslaught. It would come now when I picked up the receiver.

But I couldn't back down again — that, too, would be a signal — I had to go through with it.

The perspiration trickled across my temples from under my hat as I drew the phone closer with my left hand.

The street door opened! An exclamation of surprise came from behind me.

I spoke rapidly, without taking my eyes from the four men in front of me.

"Quick! The phone! The police!"

With the arrival of this unknown person — one of Newhouse's customers, probably — I figured I had the edge again. Even if he took no active part beyond calling the police in, the enemy would have to split to take care of him — and that would give me a chance to pot at least two of them before I was knocked over. Two out of four — each of them had an even chance of being dropped — which *is* enough to give even a nervy man cause for thinking a bit before he jumps.

"Hurry!" I urged the newcomer.

"Yes! Yes!" he said — and in the blurred sound of the "s" there was evidence of foreign birth.

Keyed up as I was, I didn't need any more warning than that.

I threw myself sidewise — a blind tumbling away from the spot where I stood. But I wasn't quite quick enough.

The blow that came from behind didn't hit me fairly, but I got enough of it to fold up my legs as if the knees were hinged with paper — and I slammed into a heap on the floor. . . .

Something dark crashed toward me. I caught it with both hands. It may have been a foot kicking at my

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face. I wrung it as a washerwoman wrings a towel.

Down my spine ran jar after jar. Perhaps somebody was beating me over the head. I don't know. My head wasn't alive. The blow that had knocked me down had numbed me all over. My eyes were no good. Shadows swam to and fro in front of them — that was all. I struck, gouged, tore at the shadows. Sometimes I found nothing. Sometimes I found things that felt like parts of bodies. Then I would hammer at them, tear at them. My gun was gone.

My hearing was no better than my sight — or not so good. There wasn't a sound in the world. I moved in a silence that was more complete than any silence I had ever known. I was a ghost fighting ghosts.

I found presently that my feet were under me again, though some squirming thing was on my back, and kept me from standing upright. A hot, damp thing like a hand was across my face.

I put my teeth into it. I snapped my head back as far as it would go. Maybe it smashed into the face it was meant for. I don't know. Anyhow the squirming thing was no longer on my back.

Dimly I realized that I was being buffeted about by blows that I was too numb to feel. Ceaselessly, with head and shoulders and elbows and fists and knees and feet, I struck at the shadows that were around me. . . .

Suddenly I could see again — not clearly — but the shadows were taking on colors; and my ears came back a little, so that grunts and growls and curses and the impact of blows sounded in them. My straining gaze rested upon a brass cuspidor six inches or so in front of my eyes. I knew then that I was down on the floor again.

As I twisted about to hurl a foot into a soft body above me, something that was like a burn, but wasn't a burn, ran down one leg — a knife. The sting of it brought consciousness back into me with a rush.

I grabbed the brass cuspidor and used it to club a way to my feet — to club a clear space in front of me. Men were hurling themselves upon me. I swung the cuspidor high and flung it over their heads, through the frosted glass door into California Street.

Then we fought some more.

But you can't throw a brass cuspidor through a glass door into California Street between Montgomery and Kearny without attracting attention — it's too near the heart of daytime San Francisco. So presently — when I was on the floor again with six or eight hundred pounds of flesh

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hammering my face into the boards — we were pulled apart, and I was dug out of the bottom of the pile by a squad of policemen.

Big sandy-haired Coffee was one of them, but it took a lot of arguing to convince him that I was the Continental operative who had talked to him a little while before.

"Man! Man!" he said, when I finally convinced him. "Them lads sure — God! have worked you over! You got a face on you like a wet geranium!"

I didn't laugh. It wasn't funny.

I looked out of the one eye, which was working just now, at the five men lined up across the office — Soules, the three inky printers, and the man with the blurred "s," who had started the slaughter by tapping me on the back of the head.

He was a rather tall man of thirty or so, with a round ruddy face that wore a few bruises now. He had been, apparently, rather well-dressed in expensive black clothing, but he was torn and ragged now. I knew who he was without asking — Hendrik Van Pelt.

"Well, man, what's the answer?" Coffee was asking me.

By holding one side of my jaw firmly with one hand I found that I could talk without too much pain.

"This is the crowd that ran down Newhouse," I said, "and it wasn't an accident. I wouldn't mind having a few more of the details myself, but I was jumped before I got around to all of them. Newhouse had a hundred-florin note in his hand when he was run down, and he was walking in the direction of police headquarters — was only half a block away from the Hall of Justice.

"Soules tells me that Newhouse said he was going up to Portsmouth Square to sit in the sun. But Soules didn't seem to know that Newhouse was wearing a black eye — the one you told me you had investigated. If Soules didn't see the shiner, then it's a good bet that Soules didn't see Newhouse's face that day!

"Newhouse was walking from his printing shop toward police headquarters with a piece of foreign paper money in his hand — remember that!

"He had frequent spells of sickness, which, according to friend Soules, always before kept him at home for a week or ten days at a time. This time he was laid up for only two and a half days.

"Soules tells me that the shop is three days behind with its orders, and he says that's the first time in eight years they've ever been behind. He blames Newhouse's death — which only happened yesterday. Apparently, Newhouse's previous sick spells never delayed things —

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why should this last spell?

"Two printers were fired last week, and two new ones hired the very next day — pretty quick work. The car with which Newhouse was run down was taken from just around the corner, and was deserted within quick walking distance of the shop. It was left facing north, which is pretty good evidence that its occupants went south after they got out. Ordinary car thieves wouldn't have circled back in the direction from which they came.

"Here's my guess: This Van Pelt is a Dutchman, and he had some plates for phoney hundred-florin notes. He hunted around until he found a printer who would go in with him. He found Soules, the foreman of a shop whose proprietor was now and then at home for a week or more at a time with a bad heart. One of the printers under Soules was willing to go in with them. Maybe the other two turned the offer down. Maybe Soules didn't ask them at all. Anyhow, they were discharged, and two friends of Soules were given their places.

"Our friends then got everything ready, and waited for Newhouse's heart to flop again. It did — Monday night. As soon as his wife called up next morning and said he was sick, these birds started running off their counterfeits. That's why they fell behind with their regular work. But this spell of Newhouse's was lighter than usual. He was up and moving around within two days, and yesterday afternoon he came down here for a few minutes.

"He must have walked in while all of our friends were extremely busy in some far corner. He must have spotted some of the phoney money, immediately sized up the situation, grabbed one bill to show the police, and started out for police headquarters — no doubt thinking he had not been seen by our friends here.

"They must have got a glimpse of him as he was leaving, however. Two of them followed him out. They couldn't, afoot, safely knock him over within a block or two of the Hall of Justice. But, turning the corner, they found Chrostwaite's car standing there with idling engine. That solved their getaway problem. They got in the car and went on after Newhouse. I suppose the original plan was to shoot him — but he crossed Clay Street with his eyes fastened upon the phoney money in his hand. That gave them a golden chance. They piled the car into him. It was sure death, they knew — his bum heart would finish the job if the actual collision didn't kill him. Then they deserted the car and came back here.

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"There are a lot of loose ends to be gathered in — but this pipe-dream I've just told you fits in with all the facts we know — and I'll bet a month's salary I'm not far off anywhere.

"There ought to be a three-day crop of Dutch notes cached somewhere! You people —"

I suppose I'd have gone on talking forever — in the giddy, head-swimming intoxication of utter exhaustion that filled me — if the big sandy-haired patrolman hadn't shut me off by putting a big hand across my mouth.

"Be quiet, man," he said, lifting me out of the chair, and spreading me flat on my back on the desk. "I'll have an ambulance here in a second for you."

The office was swirling around in front of my one open eye — the yellow ceiling swung down toward me, rose again, disappeared, came back in odd shapes. I turned my head to one side to avoid it, and my glance rested upon the white dial of a spinning clock.

Presently the dial came to rest, and I read it — four o'clock.

I remembered that Chrostwaite had broken up our conference in Vance Richmond's office at three, and I had started to work.

"One full hour!" I tried to tell Coffee before I went to sleep.

The police wound up the job while I was lying on my back in bed. In Van Pelt's office on Bush Street they found a great bale of hundred-florin notes. Van Pelt, they learned, had considerable reputation in Europe as a high-class counterfeiter. One of the printers came through, stating that Van Pelt and Soules were the two who followed Newhouse out of the shop, and killed him.

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Now that we have run the gamut of Georges Simenon's short story detectives — M. Froget, Joseph Leborgne, G. 7 — your Editor feels that he can perform no greater service for his readers than to start the cycle all over again.

For the first time in America — indeed, for the first time in the English language anywhere — we publish "Affaire Ziliouk," featuring the precise, infinitely patient M. Froget, with his ten-sous notebook and its red-ink marginal epilogues. Again Mr. Anthony Boucher is the translator, and again Mr. Boucher distills into sharp, merciless prose the very essence of Simenon's style.

Your Editor warns you, if you hope to anticipate M. Froget's clever and well-concealed solution, that you must be on your intellectual toes. The clue is there — a gleam's-throw from your nose — if your eyes and brain are keen enough to spot the single, vital point.

AFFAIRE ZILIOUK

by GEORGES SIMENON

(Translated from the original French by Anthony Boucher)

THE adversaries were evenly matched — so much so that the general opinion in the prosecutor's office held that Examining Magistrate Froget was at last riding for a long overdue fall, which would not have been unwelcome news in certain quarters.

Froget was seated behind his desk in a posture that looked uncomfortable, one shoulder higher than the other, his head hunched forward. As always, he was a study in black and white: the white of his skin, his hair, his spotless linen, the black of his formally tailored suit.

His eyes rested on his old ten-sous notebook, black as the suit, and on the file of the case: *Affaire Ziliouk.*

For weeks the papers had been crammed with the dubious history of this grand-scale adventurer, this Ziliouk. He was a Hungarian . . . or Polish, or Lithuanian, or Latvian. No one knew precisely; by the time he was twenty, he had already been deported from five or six countries.

Now at thirty-five (or was he forty, or thirty, or less . . . or more?), he had been arrested in his luxurious Paris residence on a warrant issued by the president of the council, to whom he had proposed a deal in his usual commodity: diplomatic documents.

Genuine or fraudulent? Opinion was divided. Ziliouk was known to have sold to England certain Soviet

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documents which provoked a ministerial crisis and broke off negotiations between the two countries. He had sold Japanese papers to America and American papers to Japan. He had left signs of his activities in Bulgaria, in Serbia, in Rome, and in Madrid.

He looked young, but with the false youthfulness of well-preserved middle age. He dressed well, even sumptuously, but with the false elegance of the man not born to wealth and taste.

Rulers and heads of States had written to this man. He had penetrated into most of the inner diplomatic circles of the world.

Since his arrest, he had been assertively defiant. "You'll see. You'll only have to let me go in the end, and then so much the worse for you." He even went so far as to hint, despite all known evidence, that he was actually engaged in work for the Deuxième Bureau, the Intelligence division of the French republic, and that he was intimately connected with the British Secret Service.

The other magistrates had wanted no part of this business. It was the typical case in which an honest examining magistrate might easily, for his pains, put an end to his career.

Ziliouk sat there, dressed in a suit from the best tailor in London, carefully groomed, vaguely smiling.

For an hour, M. Froget had not addressed a single word to him. With small, precise movements, like a mouse nibbling, the magistrate read over the reports of the mobile squad. The prisoner could make out their title, upside-down: *Affaire Ziliouk*.

He read them as if he were seeing them for the first time. Then he would look up at the prisoner with that concentrated stare, heavy as lead, that was peculiarly his own. Nothing like what they call "a piercing gaze." Nothing alarming about it either. Just a calm stare that slowly focused on an object and then could stay glued to it for hours.

His first words came when Ziliouk, with calculated indifference, lit a cigaret.

"Smoke bothers me. . . ."

And, possibly for the first time in his career, the adventurer felt ill at ease. His bravado forced him to speak. "I might as well warn you: You won't get anywhere. They claim the documents I wished to sell to France are fakes. I defy you to convict me on that charge. They claim too that I sold some equally false diplomatic documents on French foreign policy to Germany. . . . But who's seen these documents? Nobody. The only prosecution witness is an underling from the Deuxième Bureau; and I guarantee to prove that he's been playing both

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ends against the middle, just as I guarantee to prove that I've rendered invaluable services to that same Bureau."

No answer. M. Froget lowered his gaze to a new report which he read straight through.

This had been going on for an hour. And Ziliouk waited in vain for any sign of curiosity, of anger, of emotion — in short, for any human movement. Again he had to speak:

"Even supposing I were convicted, it wouldn't be for more than three years, like X and Z." (He named two spies recently sentenced by the French courts.) "Afterwards, France would pay me dear."

The papers rustled on M. Froget's desk. The magistrate read on. He had before him all Ziliouk's identification papers, one as great a fraud as the next. It would have been a pretty task to establish, beyond a shadow of doubt, even that he had been born in one country rather than another. In turn he had called himself Carlyle, Sunbeam, Smith, Keller, Lipton, Rochet. There had doubtless been other names as well.

He carried fifty thousand dollars on him at the time of his arrest.

They had been closeted together for an hour and a half, and M. Froget had yet to ask a single question. He was now reading a military report: Ten years earlier, in 1920, Ziliouk had been arrested in Germany, under somewhat mysterious circumstances. He had been released a month later, still more mysteriously. While in jail, he had received a visit from one of the chiefs of the Wilhelmstrasse.

The man was dangerous, that much was clear. He was a scoundrel, that much was his boast. But as he himself insisted, he left no loophole for action in the courts.

And M. Froget went on sitting . . . motionless, his left shoulder always higher than his right, his indifferent gaze resting now on the papers, now on the prisoner.

"You would recognize the photograph of your last mistress?" he asked suddenly, in a dull voice.

Ziliouk burst out laughing. "Hardly, my dear magistrate! Hardly! It was a charming child at Picratt's, the bar in the Rue Daunou. . . . I saw very little of her. . . ." And his laughter became ambiguous, almost obscene. He was bold enough to add: "Why? Is she one of your friends?"

"What language did you employ with her?"

Once more Ziliouk ventured into indecency. He answered with a phrase which it is impossible to print, but which left the magistrate unmoved.

"Very well. At one point she spoke

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to you in the patois of Lille and you answered her in the same dialect. This annoyed her, because she had not expected a stranger to understand her remarks; they were hardly flattering."

Silence from Ziliouk. Silence from the magistrate, for a quarter of an hour. Slowly he pored over the file, then took out another which bore on its yellow envelope, in a fine round hand, the title: *Affaire Stephen.*

The words were written large. Ziliouk could read them as easily as M. Froget. And Froget left him time to prepare his answers, the least details of his reactions.

It was an old file, dating back eight years. It had been shelved as "*Unsolved*" for years. It dealt with a certain woman Stephen, wife of Pierre Stephen, murdered in circumstances implicating her lover, a Polish workman, who had disappeared and never been traced.

Pierre Stephen was foreman in a chemical factory to which an artillery officer had been assigned, presumably for researches concerning national defense.

Certain documents, among others the description of a new gas mask, had disappeared around the time of the murder. The Stephens, at that time, had been living on a scale far above their previous habits, and had made certain purchases scarcely compatible with their known resources.

Then came the tragedy: the woman Stephen found dead near the factory.

No one knew much of her lover. He'd been seen hanging around the district. He lived in the midst of a whole tribe of Polish workers, but his countrymen didn't know which factory he worked at. They weren't even sure of his name.

He disappeared on the very day of the crime.

The game was noticeably shifting to new territory. Ziliouk emphasized even more strongly his bored indifference. "I don't know what you mean to insinuate," he said with an aggressive irony. "If you're interested, I can answer you in the pidgin of a Java coolie as readily in the slang of a Ford mechanic."

This was true; his linguistic facility was so thorough that one report placed him in China three years ago as privy councilor to a general of the Southern party. When he was arrested by an inspector attached to the colonial police, he noticed that the officer's tie-pin was made by the Moïs of Indo-China and struck up a conversation in the dialect of that tribe.

No words could describe the detachment of M. Froget, whose attitude had not varied a trifle since the

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start of this session. Most examining magistrates pile up questions, deafen the accused until they wring from him a phrase that amounts to a confession. But M. Froget left his opponent time to think, and even to think too much. His silences would last several minutes, his questions barely a matter of seconds.

Up till now, he had asked only two questions. The specialist interested in such matters should count the number of words that issued from M. Froget's lips during the rest of this examination.

Now the magistrate was reading to himself a telegram which he had dispatched to the prosecutor's office at Lille and its answer:

Q. — WHERE DID STEPHENS COME FROM? HOW LONG IN LILLE AT DATE OF CRIME?

A. — NATIVES OF LOIRE. STEPHENS ARRIVED LILLE FROM SAINT-ETIENNE ONE MONTH BEFORE CRIME. LILLE FACTORY ORDERED SPECIALISTS FOR NEW WORK FROM SAINT-ETIENNE FACTORY CONTROLLED BY SAME FINANCIAL GROUP. STEPHEN IN LOT SENT NORTH JUNE.

M. Froget spoke for the third time:

"Can you tell me accurately where you were in the month of June eight years ago?" The crime had been committed in mid-July.

"In Berlin!" Ziliouk replied unhesitatingly. "And if you must know, in daily contact with the Wilhelmstrasse. I don't know what you're getting at, but I warn you it's a blind alley. I don't know the Stephens."

M. Froget turned the page and consulted the last of the documents. This came from the Deuxième Bureau and read:

> Pierre Stephen, foreman at the munitions factory of Saint-Etienne, suspected by his coworkers of relations with enemy agents although no proof could be established, was sent toward the end of June, on advice of the counter-espionage department, to Lille, where there was a demand for specialists with his qualifications.
>
> The purpose was to see if documents would disappear there too.
>
> Before it was possible to establish the guilt of Stephen or, more important, to discover his accomplices, the murder of his wife by an unknown assassin altered the situation.
>
> Broken and aged by the tragedy, Stephen left Lille and is now employed as nightwatchman at a factory in Pantin. Since the crime, his conduct has given rise to no suspicions whatsoever.

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So far M. Froget had not spoken four sentences. Now he rose without displaying the least emotion. He proved taller and heavier than one thought, seeing him seated.

He looked at Ziliouk as though at the most ordinary everyday object. And he pronounced wearily, like a man who has finished his chores, while he brushed his black hat with the inside of his black sleeve:

"I charge you with voluntary homicide on the person of the woman Stephen."

"Why?" Ziliouk asked, lighting another cigaret.

M. Froget seemed not to hear him. His attention was held by a spot on his hat.

"You haven't any proof!" Ziliouk insisted.

The word *proof* called M. Froget back to reality. He spoke slowly:

"A child could see the pattern clearly. Three indicative presumptions convict you, aside from the formal proof that constituted your confession." M. Froget counted on his fingers: "First of all, your knowledge of the Lille patois. . . . Second, the rapidity and precision with which you answered when I asked you where you were eight years ago in June. . . . Third, the fact that you belonged to the German secret service."

Ziliouk blew smoke. "My confession?" he asked.

M. Froget looked down at his open notebook:

> Everyday affair. The Stephens furnished documents concerning national defense to Ziliouk, agent in the service of Germany. When Ziliouk learns that the Stephens are suspected and sent to Lille, he fears that his mistress might inform on him and get him convicted as an accomplice. He decides to suppress her. . . . After the murder of the woman, who was Ziliouk's tool, the behavior of the foreman Pierre Stephen gives rise to no further suspicion.

"My confession?" Ziliouk repeated.

"All you could read on my file," said M. Froget flatly, "was the title: *Affaire Stephen*. You said to me, 'I don't know *the Stephens*.' That plural was your confession."

Ziliouk took the shock unblenching. He was worthy of his adversary. M. Froget gazed at him, then took up a pen and dipped it in red ink. In the margin of his notebook he wrote: *Had nothing to say.*

Those words had never been said of Ziliouk before.

Then M. Froget rang for the guards.

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In Agatha Christie's work the unusual is usually the usual — or, to put it another way, Agatha Christie usually eschews the usual. In "The Mystery of the Blue Jar" a young man hears a woman's voice scream: "Murder — help! Murder!" — a not unusual situation; but when everyone else within earshot denies having heard any cry for help, Agatha Christie is back in her usual form — contriving the unusual.

Needless to say, the solution to the mystery is decidedly unusual.

THE MYSTERY OF THE BLUE JAR

by AGATHA CHRISTIE

JACK HARTINGTON surveyed his topped drive ruefully. Standing by the ball, he looked back to the tee, measuring the distance. His face was eloquent of the disgusted contempt which he felt. With a sigh he drew out his iron, executed two vicious swings with it, annihilating in turn a dandelion and a tuft of grass, and then addressed himself firmly to the ball.

It is hard when you are twenty-four years of age, and your one ambition in life is to reduce your handicap at golf, to be forced to give time and attention to the problem of earning your living. Five and a half days out of the seven saw Jack imprisoned in a kind of mahogany tomb in the city. Saturday afternoon and Sunday were religiously devoted to the real business of life, and in an excess of zeal he had taken rooms at the small hotel near Stourton Heath links, and rose daily at the hour of six a.m. to get in an hour's practice before catching the 8.46 to town.

The only disadvantage to the plan was that he seemed constitutionally unable to hit anything at that hour in the morning. A foozled iron succeeded a muffed drive. His mashie shots ran merrily along the ground, and four putts seemed to be the minimum on any green.

Jack sighed, grasped his iron firmly and repeated to himself the magic words, "Left arm right through, and don't look up."

He swung back — and then stopped, petrified, as a shrill cry rent the silence of the summer's morning.

"Murder," it called. "Help! Murder!"

It was a woman's voice, and it died

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away at the end into a sort of gurgling sigh.

Jack flung down his club and ran in the direction of the sound. It had come from somewhere quite near at hand. This particular part of the course was quite wild country, and there were few houses about. In fact, there was only one near at hand, a small picturesque cottage, which Jack had often noticed for its air of old world daintiness. It was towards this cottage that he ran. It was hidden from him by a heather-covered slope, but he rounded this and in less than a minute was standing with his hand on the small latched gate.

There was a girl standing in the garden, and for a moment Jack jumped to the natural conclusion that it was she who had uttered the cry for help. But he quickly changed his mind.

She had a little basket in her hand, half-full of weeds, and had evidently just straightened herself up from weeding a wide border of pansies. Her eyes, Jack noticed, were just like pansies themselves, velvety and soft and dark, and more violet than blue. She was like a pansy altogether, in her straight purple linen gown.

The girl was looking at Jack with an expression midway between annoyance and surprise.

"I beg your pardon," said the young man. "But did you cry out just now?"

"I? No, indeed."

Her surprise was so genuine that Jack felt confused. Her voice was very soft and pretty with a slight foreign inflection.

"But you must have heard it," he exclaimed. "It came from somewhere just near here."

She stared at him.

"I heard nothing at all."

Jack in his turn stared at her. It was perfectly incredible that she should not have heard that agonised appeal for help. And yet her calmness was so evident that he could not believe she was lying to him.

"It came from somewhere close at hand," he insisted.

She was looking at him suspiciously now.

"What did it say?" she asked.

"Murder — help! Murder!"

"Murder — help, murder," repeated the girl. "Somebody has played a trick on you, Monsieur. Who could be murdered here?"

Jack looked about him with a confused idea of discovering a dead body upon a garden path. Yet he was still perfectly sure that the cry he had heard was real and not a product of his imagination. He looked up at the cottage windows. Everything seemed perfectly still and peaceful.

"Do you want to search our

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house?" asked the girl drily.

She was so clearly sceptical that Jack's confusion grew deeper than ever. He turned away.

"I'm sorry," he said. "It must have come from higher up in the woods."

He raised his cap and retreated. Glancing back over his shoulder, he saw that the girl had calmly resumed her weeding.

For some time he hunted through the woods, but could find no sign of anything unusual having occurred. Yet he was as positive as ever that he had really heard the cry. In the end, he gave up the search and hurried home to bolt his breakfast and catch the 8.46 by the usual narrow margin of a second or so. His conscience pricked him a little as he sat in the train. Ought he not to have immediately reported what he had heard to the police? That he had not done so was solely owing to the pansy girl's incredulity. She had clearly suspected him of romancing — possibly the police might do the same. *Was* he absolutely certain that he had heard the cry?

By now he was not nearly so positive as he had been — the natural result of trying to recapture a lost sensation. Was it some bird's cry in the distance that he had twisted into the semblance of a woman's voice?

But he rejected the suggestion angrily. It was a woman's voice, and he had heard it. He remembered looking at his watch just before the cry had come. As nearly as possible it must have been five and twenty minutes past seven when he had heard the call. That might be a fact useful to the police if — if anything should be discovered.

Going home that evening, he scanned the evening papers anxiously to see if there were any mention of a crime having been committed. But there was nothing, and he hardly knew whether to be relieved or disappointed.

The following morning was wet — so wet that even the most ardent golfer might have his enthusiasm damped. Jack rose at the last possible moment, gulped his breakfast, ran for the train and again eagerly scanned the papers. Still no mention of any gruesome discovery having been made. The evening papers told the same tale.

"Queer," said Jack to himself, "but there it is. Probably some blinking little boys having a game together up in the woods."

He was out early the following morning. As he passed the cottage, he noted out of the tail of his eye that the girl was out in the garden again weeding. Evidently a habit of hers. He did a particularly good approach shot, and hoped that she had

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noticed it. As he teed up on the next tee, he glanced at his watch.

"Just five and twenty past seven," he murmured. "I wonder — "

The words were frozen on his lips. From behind him came the same cry which had so startled him before. A woman's voice, in dire distress.

"*Murder — help, murder!*"

Jack raced back. The pansy girl was standing by the gate. She looked startled, and Jack ran up to her triumphantly, crying out:

"You heard it this time, anyway."

Her eyes were wide with some emotion he could not fathom but he noticed that she shrank back from him as he approached, and even glanced back at the house, as though she meditated running to it for shelter.

She shook her head, staring at him.

"I heard nothing at all," she said wonderingly.

It was as though she had struck him a blow between the eyes. Her sincerity was so evident that he could not disbelieve her. Yet he couldn't have imagined it — he couldn't — he couldn't —

He heard her voice speaking gently — almost with sympathy.

"You have had the shell-shock, yes?"

In a flash he understood her look of fear, her glance back at the house. She thought that he suffered from delusions. . . .

And then, like a douche of cold water, came the horrible thought, was she right? *Did* he suffer from delusions? Obsessed by the horror of the thought, he turned and stumbled away without vouchsafing a word. The girl watched him go, sighed, shook her head, and bent down to her weeding again.

Jack endeavoured to reason matters out with himself. "If I hear the damned thing again at twenty-five minutes past seven," he said to himself, "it's clear that I've got hold of a hallucination of some sort. But I won't hear it."

He was nervous all that day, and went to bed early determined to put the matter to the proof the following morning.

As was perhaps natural in such a case, he remained awake half the night, and finally overslept himself. It was twenty past seven by the time he was clear of the hotel and running towards the links. He realised that he would not be able to get to the fatal spot by twenty-five past, but surely, if the voice was a hallucination pure and simple, he would hear it anywhere. He ran on, his eyes fixed on the hands of his watch.

Twenty-five past. From far off came the echo of a woman's voice, calling. The words could not

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be distinguished, but he was convinced that it was the same cry he had heard before, and that it came from the same spot, somewhere in the neighbourhood of the cottage.

Strangely enough, that fact reassured him. It might, after all, be a hoax. Unlikely as it seemed, the girl herself might be playing a trick on him. He set his shoulders resolutely, and took out a club from his golf bag. He would play the few holes up to the cottage.

The girl was in the garden as usual. She looked up this morning, and when he raised his cap to her, said good-morning rather shyly. . . . She looked, he thought, lovelier than ever.

"Nice day, isn't it?" Jack called out cheerily, cursing the unavoidable banality of the observation.

"Yes, indeed, it is lovely."

"Good for the garden, I expect?"

The girl smiled a little, disclosing a fascinating dimple.

"Alas, no! For my flowers the rain is needed. See, they are all dried up."

Jack accepted the invitation of her gesture, and came up to the low hedge dividing the garden from the course, looking over it into the garden.

"They seem all right," he remarked awkwardly, conscious as he spoke of the girl's slightly pitying glance running over him.

"The sun is good, is it not?" she said. "For the flowers one can always water them. But the sun gives strength and repairs the health. Monsieur is much better to-day, I can see."

Her encouraging tone annoyed Jack intensely.

"Curse it all," he said to himself. "I believe she's trying to cure me by suggestion."

"I'm perfectly well," he said irritably.

"That is good then," returned the girl quickly and soothingly.

Jack had the irritating feeling that she didn't believe him.

He played a few more holes and hurried back to breakfast. As he ate it, he was conscious, not for the first time, of the close scrutiny of a man who sat at the table next to him. He was a man of middle-age, with a powerful, forceful face. He had a small dark beard and very piercing grey eyes, and an ease and assurance of manner which placed him among the higher ranks of the professional classes. His name, Jack knew, was Lavington, and he had heard vague rumours as to his being a well-known medical specialist, but as Jack was not a frequenter of Harley Street, the name had conveyed little or nothing to him.

But this morning he was very con-

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scious of the quiet observation under which he was being kept, and it frightened him a little. Was his secret written plainly in his face for all to see? Did this man, by reason of his professional calling, know that there was something amiss in the hidden grey matter.

Jack shivered at the thought. Was it true? Was he really going mad? Was the whole thing a hallucination, or was it a gigantic hoax?

And suddenly a very simple way of testing the solution occurred to him. He had hitherto been alone on his round. Supposing someone else was with him? Then one out of three things might happen. The voice might be silent. They might both hear it. Or — he only might hear it.

That evening he proceeded to carry his plan into effect. Lavington was the man he wanted with him. They fell into conversation easily enough — the older man might have been waiting for such an opening. It was clear that for some reason or other Jack interested him. The latter was able to come quite easily and naturally to the suggestion that they might play a few holes together before breakfast. The arrangement was made for the following morning.

They started out a little before seven. It was a perfect day, still and cloudless, but not too warm. The doctor was playing well, Jack wretchedly. His whole mind was intent on the forthcoming crisis. He kept glancing surreptitiously at his watch. They reached the seventh tee, between which and the hole the cottage was situated, about twenty past seven.

The girl, as usual, was in the garden as they passed. She did not look up as they passed.

The two balls lay on the green, Jack's near the hole, the doctor's some little distance away.

"I've got this for it," said Lavington. "I must go for it, I suppose."

He bent down, judging the line he should take. Jack stood rigid, his eyes glued on his watch. It was exactly twenty-five minutes past seven.

The ball ran swiftly along the grass, stopped on the edge of the hole, hesitated and dropped in.

"Good putt," said Jack. His voice sounded hoarse and unlike himself. . . . He shoved his wrist watch farther up his arm with a sigh of overwhelming relief. Nothing had happened. The spell was broken.

"If you don't mind waiting a minute," he said, "I think I'll have a pipe."

They paused a while on the eighth tee. Jack filled and lit the pipe with fingers that trembled a little in spite of himself. An enormous weight

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seemed to have lifted from his mind.

"Lord, what a good day it is," he remarked, staring at the prospect ahead of him with great contentment. "Go on, Lavington, your swipe."

And then it came. Just at the very instant the doctor was hitting. A woman's voice, high and agonised.

"Murder — Help! Murder!"

The pipe fell from Jack's nerveless hand, as he spun round in the direction of the sound, and then, remembering, gazed breathlessly at his companion.

Lavington was looking down the course, shading his eyes.

"A bit short — just cleared the bunker, though, I think."

He had heard nothing.

The world seemed to spin round with Jack. He took a step or two, lurching heavily. When he recovered himself, he was lying on the short turf, and Lavington was bending over him.

"There, take it easy now, take it easy."

"What did I do?"

"You fainted, young man — or gave a very good try at it."

"My God!" said Jack, and groaned.

"What's the trouble? Something on your mind?"

"I'll tell you in one minute, but I'd like to ask you something first."

The doctor lit his own pipe and settled himself on the bank.

"Ask anything you like," he said comfortably.

"You've been watching me for the last day or two. Why?"

Lavington's eyes twinkled a little.

"That's rather an awkward question. A cat can look at a king, you know."

"Don't put me off. I'm in earnest. Why was it? I've a vital reason for asking."

Lavington's face grew serious.

"I'll answer you quite honestly. I recognised in you all the signs of a man labouring under a sense of acute strain, and it intrigued me what that strain could be."

"I can tell you that easily enough," said Jack bitterly. "I'm going mad."

He stopped dramatically, but his statement not seeming to arouse the interest and consternation he expected, he repeated it.

"I tell you I'm going mad."

"Very curious," murmured Lavington. "Very curious indeed."

Jack felt indignant.

"I suppose that's all it does seem to you. Doctors are so damned callous."

"Come, come, my young friend, you're talking at random. To begin with, although I have taken my degree, I do not practise medicine. Strictly speaking, I am not a doctor

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—not a doctor of the body, that is."

Jack looked at him keenly.

"Of the mind?"

"Yes, in a sense, but more truly I call myself a doctor of the soul."

"Oh!"

"I perceive the disparagement in your tone, and yet we must use some word to denote the active principle which can be separated and exist independently of its fleshy home, the body. You've got to come to terms with the soul, you know, young man, it isn't just a religious term invented by clergymen. But we'll call it the mind, or the subconscious self, or any term that suits you better. You took offence at my tone just now, but I can assure you that it really did strike me as very curious that such a well-balanced and perfectly normal young man as yourself should suffer from the delusion that he was going out of his mind."

"I'm out of my mind all right. Absolutely balmy."

"You will forgive me for saying so, but I don't believe it."

"I suffer from delusions."

"After dinner?"

"No, in the morning."

"Can't be done," said the doctor, relighting his pipe which had gone out.

"I tell you I hear things that no one else hears."

"One man in a thousand can see the moons of Jupiter. Because the other nine hundred and ninety-nine can't see them there's no reason to doubt that the moons of Jupiter exist, and certainly no reason for calling the thousandth man a lunatic."

"The moons of Jupiter are a proved scientific fact."

"It's quite possible that the delusions of to-day may be the proved scientific facts of to-morrow."

In spite of himself, Lavington's matter-of-fact manner was having its effect upon Jack. He felt immeasurably soothed and cheered. The doctor looked at him attentively for a minute or two and then nodded.

"That's better," he said. "The trouble with you young fellows is that you're so cocksure nothing can exist outside your own philosophy that you get the wind up when something occurs to jolt you out of that opinion. Let's hear your grounds for believing that you're going mad, and we'll decide whether or not to lock you up afterwards."

As faithfully as he could, Jack narrated the whole series of occurrences.

"But what I can't understand," he ended, "is why this morning it should come at half-past seven—five minutes late."

Lavington thought for a minute or two. Then—

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"What's the time now by your watch?" he asked.

"Quarter to eight," replied Jack, consulting it.

"That's simple enough, then. Mine says twenty to eight. Your watch is five minutes fast. That's a very interesting and important point — to me. In fact, it's invaluable."

"In what way?"

Jack was beginning to get interested.

"Well, the obvious explanation is that on the first morning you *did* hear some such cry — may have been a joke, may not. On the following mornings, you suggestioned yourself to hear it at exactly the same time."

"I'm sure I didn't."

"Not consciously, of course, but the subconscious plays us some funny tricks, you know. But anyway, that explanation won't wash. If it was a case of suggestion, you would have heard the cry at twenty-five minutes past seven by your watch, and you could never have heard it when the time, as you thought, was past."

"Well, then?"

"Well — it's obvious, isn't it? This cry for help occupies a perfectly definite place and time in space. The place is the vicinity of that cottage and the time is twenty-five minutes past seven."

"Yes, but why should *I* be the one to hear it? I don't believe in ghosts and all that spook stuff — spirits rapping and all the rest of it. Why should I hear the damned thing?"

"Ah! that we can't tell at present. It's a curious thing that many of the best mediums are made out of confirmed sceptics. It isn't the people who are interested in occult phenomena who get the manifestations. Some people see and hear things that other people don't — we don't know why, and nine times out of ten they don't want to see or hear them, and are convinced that they are suffering from delusions — just as you were. It's like electricity. Some substances are good conductors, others are non-conductors, and for a long time we didn't know why, and had to be content just to accept the fact. Nowadays we do know why. Some day, no doubt, we shall know why you hear this thing and I and the girl don't. Everything's governed by natural law, you know — there's no such thing really as the supernatural. Finding out the laws that govern so-called psychic phenomena is going to be a tough job — but every little helps."

"But what am I going to *do*?" asked Jack.

Lavington chuckled.

"Practical, I see. Well, my young friend, you are going to have a good breakfast and get off to the city

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without worrying your head further about things you don't understand. I, on the other hand, am going to poke about, and see what I can find out about that cottage back there. That's where the mystery centres, I dare swear."

Jack rose to his feet.

"Right, sir. I'm on, but, I say —"

"Yes?"

Jack flushed awkwardly.

"I'm sure the girl's all right," he muttered.

Lavington looked amused.

"You didn't tell me she was a pretty girl! Well, cheer up, I think the mystery started before her time."

Jack arrived home that evening in a perfect fever of curiosity. He was by now pinning his faith blindly to Lavington. The doctor had accepted the matter so naturally, had been so matter-of-fact and unperturbed by it, that Jack was impressed.

He found his new friend waiting for him in the hall when he came down for dinner, and the doctor suggested that they should dine together at the same table.

"Any news, sir?" asked Jack anxiously.

"I've collected the life history of Heather Cottage all right. It was tenanted first by an old gardener and his wife. The old man died, and the old woman went to her daughter. Then a builder got hold of it, and modernised it with great success, selling it to a city gentleman who used it for week-ends. About a year ago, he sold it to some people called Turner — Mr. and Mrs. Turner. They seem to have been rather a curious couple from all I can make out. He was an Englishman, his wife was popularly supposed to be partly Russian, and was a very handsome exotic-looking woman. They lived very quietly, seeing no one, and hardly ever going outside the cottage garden. The local rumour goes that they were afraid of something — but I don't think we ought to rely on that.

"And then suddenly one day they departed, cleared out one morning early, and never came back. The agents here got a letter from Mr. Turner, written from London, instructing him to sell up the place as quickly as possible. The furniture was sold off, and the house itself was sold to a Mr. Mauleverer. He only actually lived in it a fortnight — then he advertised it to be let furnished. The people who have it now are a consumptive French professor and his daughter. They have been there just ten days."

Jack digested this in silence.

"I don't see that that gets us any forrader," he said at last. "Do you?"

"I rather want to know more

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about the Turners," said Lavington quietly. "They left very early in the morning, you remember. As far as I can make out, nobody actually saw them go. Mr. Turner has been seen since — but I can't find anybody who has seen Mrs. Turner."

Jack paled.

"It can't be — you don't mean —"

"Don't excite yourself, young man. The influence of anyone at the point of death — and especially of violent death — upon their surroundings is very strong. Those surroundings might conceivably absorb that influence, transmitting it in turn to a suitably tuned receiver — in this case yourself."

"But why me?" murmured Jack rebelliously. "Why not someone who could do some good?"

"You are regarding the force as intelligent and purposeful, instead of blind and mechanical. I do not believe myself in earth-bound spirits, haunting a spot for one particular purpose. But the thing I have seen, again and again, until I can hardly believe it to be pure coincidence, is a kind of blind groping towards justice — a subterranean moving of blind forces, always working obscurely towards that end. . . ."

He shook himself — as though casting off some obsession that preoccupied him, and turned to Jack with a ready smile.

"Let us banish the subject — for to-night at all events," he suggested.

Jack agreed readily enough, but did not find it so easy to banish the subject from his own mind.

During the week-end, he made vigorous inquiries of his own, but succeeded in eliciting little more than the doctor had done. He had definitely given up playing golf before breakfast.

The next link in the chain came from an unexpected quarter. On getting back one day, Jack was informed that a young lady was waiting to see him. To his intense surprise it proved to be the girl of the garden — the pansy girl, as he always called her in his own mind. She was very nervous and confused.

"You will forgive me, Monsieur, for coming to seek you like this? But there is something I want to tell you — I —"

She looked round uncertainly.

"Come in here," said Jack promptly, leading the way into the now deserted "Ladies' Drawing-room" of the hotel, a dreary apartment, with a good deal of red plush about it. "Now, sit down, Miss, Miss —"

"Marchaud, Monsieur. Felise Marchaud."

"Sit down, Mademoiselle Marchaud, and tell me all about it."

Felise sat down obediently. She was dressed in dark green to-day, and the

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beauty and charm of the proud little face was more evident than ever. Jack's heart beat faster as he sat down beside her.

"It is like this," explained Felise. "We have been here but a short time, and from the beginning we hear the house — our so sweet little house — is haunted. No servant will stay in it. That does not matter so much — me, I can do the *ménage* and cook easily enough."

"Angel," thought the infatuated young man. "She's wonderful."

But he maintained an outward semblance of businesslike attention.

"This talk of ghosts, I think it is all folly — that is until four days ago. Monsieur, four nights running, I have had the same dream. A lady stands there — she is beautiful, tall and very fair. In her hands she holds a blue china jar. She is distressed — very distressed, and continually she holds out the jar to me, as though imploring me to do something with it — but alas! she cannot speak, and I — I do not know what she asks. That was the dream for the first two nights — but the night before last, there was more of it. She and the blue jar faded away, and suddenly I heard her voice crying out — I know it is her voice, you comprehend — and, oh! Monsieur, the words she says are those you spoke to me that morning. 'Murder — Help! Murder!' I awoke in terror. I say to myself — it is a nightmare, the words you heard are an accident. But last night the dream came again. Monsieur, what is it? You too have heard. What shall we do?"

Felise's face was terrified. Her small hands clasped themselves together, and she gazed appealingly at Jack. The latter affected an unconcern he did not feel.

"That's all right, Mademoiselle Marchaud. You mustn't worry. I tell you what I'd like you to do, if you don't mind, repeat the whole story to a friend of mine who is staying here, a Dr. Lavington."

Felise signified her willingness to adopt this course, and Jack went off in search of Lavington. He returned with him a few minutes later.

Lavington gave the girl a keen scrutiny as he acknowledged Jack's hurried introductions. With a few reassuring words, he soon put the girl at her ease, and he, in his turn, listened attentively to her story.

"Very curious," he said, when she had finished. "You have told your father of this?"

Felise shook her head.

"I have not liked to worry him. He is very ill still" — her eyes filled with tears — "I keep from him anything that might excite or agitate him."

"I understand," said Lavington

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kindly. "And I am glad you came to us, Mademoiselle Marchaud. Hartington here, as you know, had an experience something similar to yours. I think I may say that we are well on the track now. There is nothing else that you can think of?"

Felise gave a quick movement.

"Of course! How stupid I am. It is the point of the whole story. Look, Monsieur, at what I found at the back of one of the cupboards where it had slipped behind the shelf."

She held out to them a dirty piece of drawing-paper on which was executed roughly in water colours a sketch of a woman. It was a mere daub, but the likeness was probably good enough. It represented a tall fair woman, with something subtly un-English in her face. She was standing by a table on which was standing a blue china jar.

"I only found it this morning," explained Felise. "Monsieur le docteur, that is the face of the woman I saw in my dream, and that is the identical blue jar."

"Extraordinary," commented Lavington. "The key to the mystery is evidently the blue jar. It looks like a Chinese jar to me, probably an old one. It seems to have a curious raised pattern over it."

"It is Chinese," declared Jack. "I have seen an exactly similar one in my uncle's collection — he is a great collector of Chinese porcelain, you know, and I remember noticing a jar just like this a short time ago."

"The Chinese jar," mused Lavington. He remained a minute or two lost in thought, then raised his head suddenly, a curious light shining in his eyes. "Hartington, how long has your uncle had that jar?"

"How long? I really don't know."

"Think. Did he buy it lately?"

"I don't know — yes, I believe he did, now I come to think of it. I'm not very interested in porcelain myself, but I remember his showing me his 'recent acquisitions,' and this was one of them."

"Less than two months ago? The Turners left Heather Cottage just two months ago."

"Yes, I believe it was."

"Your uncle attends country sales sometimes?"

"He's always tooling round to sales."

"Then there is no inherent improbability in our assuming that he bought this particular piece of porcelain at the sale of the Turners' things. A curious coincidence — or perhaps what I call the groping of blind justice. Hartington, you must find out from your uncle at once where he bought this jar."

Jack's face fell.

"I'm afraid that's impossible. Uncle George is away on the Conti-

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nent. I don't even know where to write to him."

"How long will he be away?"

"Three weeks to a month at least."

There was a silence. Felise sat looking anxiously from one man to the other.

"Is there nothing that we can do?" she asked timidly.

"Yes, there is one thing," said Lavington, in a tone of suppressed excitement. "It is unusual, perhaps, but I believe that it will succeed. Hartington, you must get hold of that jar. Bring it down here and, if Mademoiselle permits, we will spend a night in Heather Cottage, taking the blue jar with us."

Jack felt his skin creep uncomfortably.

"What do you think will happen?" he asked uneasily.

"I have not the slightest idea — but I honestly believe that the mystery will be solved and the ghost laid. Quite possibly there may be a false bottom to the jar and something is concealed inside it. If no phenomena occurs, we must use our own ingenuity."

Felise clasped her hands.

"It is a wonderful idea," she exclaimed.

Her eyes were alight with enthusiasm. Jack did not feel nearly so enthusiastic — in fact, he was inwardly funking it badly, but nothing would have induced him to admit the fact before Felise. The doctor acted as though his suggestion were the most natural one in the world.

"When can you get the jar?" asked Felise, turning to Jack.

"To-morrow," said the latter, unwillingly.

He had to go through with it now, but the memory of that frenzied cry for help that had haunted him each morning was something to be ruthlessly thrust down and not thought about more than could be helped.

He went to his uncle's house the following evening, and took away the jar in question. He was more than ever convinced when he saw it again that it was the identical one pictured in the water colour sketch, but carefully as he looked it over he could see no sign that it contained a secret receptacle of any kind.

It was eleven o'clock when he and Lavington arrived at Heather Cottage. Felise was on the look-out for them, and opened the door softly before they had time to knock.

"Come in," she whispered. "My father is asleep upstairs, and we must not wake him. I have made coffee for you in here."

She led the way into a small cosy sitting-room. A spirit lamp stood in the grate, and bending over it, she brewed them both some fragrant coffee.

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Then Jack unfastened the Chinese jar from its many wrappings. Felise gasped as her eyes fell on it.

"But yes, but yes," she cried eagerly. "That is it — I would know it anywhere."

Meanwhile Lavington was making his own preparations. He removed all the ornaments from a small table and set it in the middle of the room. Round it he placed three chairs. Then, taking the blue jar from Jack, he placed it in the centre of the table.

"Now," he said, "we are ready. Turn off the lights, and let us sit round the table in the darkness."

The others obeyed him. Lavington's voice spoke again out of the darkness.

"Think of nothing — or of everything. Do not force the mind. It is possible that one of us has mediumistic powers. If so, that person will go into a trance. Remember, there is nothing to fear. Cast out fear from your hearts, and drift — drift —"

His voice died away and there was silence. Minute by minute, the silence seemed to grow more pregnant with possibilities. It was all very well for Lavington to say "Cast out fear." It was not fear that Jack felt — it was panic. And he was almost certain that Felise felt the same way. Suddenly he heard her voice, low and terrified.

"Something terrible is going to happen. I feel it."

"Cast out fear," said Lavington. "Do not fight against the influence."

The darkness seemed to get darker and the silence more acute. And nearer and nearer came that indefinable sense of menace.

Jack felt himself choking — stifling — the evil thing was very near. . . .

And then the moment of conflict passed. He was drifting — drifting down stream — his lids closed — peace — darkness. . . .

Jack stirred slightly. His head was heavy — heavy as lead. Where was he?

Sunshine . . . birds. . . . He lay staring up at the sky.

Then it all came back to him. The sitting. The little room. Felise and the doctor. What had happened?

He sat up, his head throbbing unpleasantly, and looked round him. He was lying in a little copse not far from the cottage. No one else was near him. He took out his watch. To his amazement it registered half-past twelve.

Jack struggled to his feet, and ran as fast as he could in the direction of the cottage. They must have been alarmed by his failure to come out of the trance, and carried him out into the open air.

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Arrived at the cottage, he knocked loudly on the door. But there was no answer, and no signs of life about it. They must have gone off to get help. Or else — Jack felt an indefinable fear invade him. What had happened last night?

He made his way back to the hotel as quickly as possible. He was about to make some inquiries at the office, when he was diverted by a colossal punch in the ribs which nearly knocked him off his feet. Turning in some indignation, he beheld a white-haired old gentleman wheezing with mirth.

"Didn't expect me, my boy. Didn't expect me, hey?" said this individual.

"Why, Uncle George, I thought you were miles away — in Italy somewhere."

"Ah! but I wasn't. Landed at Dover last night. Thought I'd motor up to town and stop here to see you on the way. And what did I find. Out all night, hey? Nice goings on —"

"Uncle George," Jack checked him firmly. "I've got the most extraordinary story to tell you. I dare say you won't believe it."

He narrated the whole story.

"And God knows what's become of them," he ended.

His uncle seemed on the verge of apoplexy.

"The jar," he managed to ejaculate at last. "THE BLUE JAR! What's become of that?"

Jack stared at him in non-comprehension, but submerged in the torrent of words that followed he began to understand.

It came with a rush: "Ming — unique — gem of my collection — worth ten thousand pounds at least — offer from Hoggenheimer, the American millionaire — only one of its kind in the world. — Confound it, sir, what have you done with my BLUE JAR?"

Jack rushed to the office. He must find Lavington. The young lady in the office eyed him coldly.

"Dr. Lavington left late last night — by motor. He left a note for you."

Jack tore it open. It was short and to the point.

"MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND:

"Is the day of the supernatural over? Not quite — especially when *tricked out in new scientific* language. Kindest regards from Felise, invalid father, and myself. We have twelve hours start, which ought to be ample.

"Yours ever,
"AMBROSE LAVINGTON,
"*Doctor of the Soul.*"

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Most good books are published both in the United States and England. There are, however, notable exceptions. In the field of the detective story, for example, that important book, MAX CARRADOS, *by Ernest Bramah, was published only in England. Frederick Irving Anderson's* THE NOTORIOUS SOPHIE LANG *was never issued in the United States; and similarly, C. Daly King's* THE CURIOUS MR. TARRANT *appeared only in England despite the fact that Mr. King, like Mr. Anderson, is an American author.*

In your Editor's opinion Mr. King's THE CURIOUS MR. TARRANT *is one of the most imaginative books of detective short stories written in the last ten years — which makes its non-appearance in the United States all the more remarkable.*

The Trevis Tarrant stories are definitely for the connoisseur of detection. Of the eight adventures-in-deduction that make up the book your Editor has chosen the episode of "The Nail and the Requiem" — a story that has the distinction of being one of only two American tales selected by Dorothy L. Sayers for her smallest, but finest, anthology, TALES OF DETECTION *(Everyman's Library, London, 1936).*

THE NAIL AND THE REQUIEM

by C. DALY KING

THE episode of the nail and the requiem was one of the most characteristic of all those in which, over a relatively brief period, I was privileged to watch Trevis Tarrant at work. Characteristic, in that it brought out so well the unusual aptitude of the man to see clearly, to welcome *all* the facts, no matter how apparently contradictory, and to think his way through to the only possible solution by sheer logic, while everyone else boggled at impossibilities and sought to forget them. From the gruesome beginning that November night, when he was confronted by the puzzle of the sealed studio, to the equally gruesome denouement that occurred despite his own grave warning twenty-four hours later, his brain clicked successively and infallibly along the rails of reason to the inevitable, true goal.

We had been to a private address at the Metropolitan Museum by a returning Egyptologist, and had come back to his apartment for a Scotch and soda.

Tarrant was saying, "Cause and effect rule this world; they may be a mirage but they are a consistent

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mirage; everywhere, except possibly in subatomic physics, there is a cause for each effect, and that cause can be found," when the manager came in. He was introduced to me as Mr. Gleeb. Apparently he had merely dropped in, as was his custom, to assure himself that all was satisfactory with a valued tenant, but the greetings were scarcely over when the phone rang and 'Hido, Tarrant's Filipino butler-valet, indicated that the manager was being called. His monosyllabic answers gave no indication of the conversation from the other end; he finished with "All right; I'll be up in a minute."

He turned back to us. "I'm sorry," he said, "but there is some trouble at the penthouse. Or else my electrician has lost his mind. He says there is a horrible kind of music being played there and that he can get no response to his ringing at the door. I shall have to go up and see what it is all about."

The statement was a peculiar one and Tarrant's eyes, I thought, held an immediate gleam of curiosity. He got out of his seat in a leisurely fashion, however, and declared, "You know, Gleeb, I'd like a breath of fresh night air. Mind if we come up with you? There's a terrace, I believe, where we can take a step or so while you're untangling the matter."

"Not at all, Mr. Tarrant. Come right along. I hardly imagine it's of any importance, but I can guarantee plenty of air."

There was, in fact, a considerable wind blowing across the open terrace that, guarded by a three-foot parapet, surrounded the penthouse on all sides except the north, where its wall was flush with that of the building. The entrance was on the west side of the studio and here stood the electrician who had come to the roof to repair the radio antennae of the apartment house and had been arrested by the strange sounds from within. As we strolled about the terrace, we observed the penthouse itself as well as the lighted view of the city below. Its southern portion possessed the usual windows but the studio part had only blank brick walls; a skylight was just visible above it and there was, indeed, a very large window, covering most of the northern wall, but this, of course, was invisible and inaccessible from the terrace.

Presently the manager beckoned us over to the entrance door, and motioning us to be silent, asked, "What do you make of that, Mr. Tarrant?"

In the silence the sound of doleful music was more than audible. It appeared to emanate from within the studio; slow, sad and mournful, it was obviously a dirge and its full-

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throated quality suggested that it was being played by a large orchestra. After a few moment's listening Tarrant said, "That is the rendition of a requiem mass and very competently done, too. Unless I'm mistaken, it is the requiem of Palestrina. . . . There; there's the end of it. . . . Now it's beginning again."

"Sure, it goes on like that all the time," contributed Wicks, the electrician. "There must be some one in there, but I can't get no answer." He banged on the door with his fist but obviously without hope of response.

"Have you looked in at the windows?"

"Sure."

We, too, stepped to the available windows and peered in what was obviously a dark and empty bedroom, but nothing was visible. The door from the bedroom to the studio was closed. The windows were all locked.

"I suggest," said Tarrant, "that we break in."

The manager hesitated. "I don't know. After all, he has a right to play any music he likes, and if he doesn't want to answer the door —"

"Who has the penthouse, anyhow?"

"A man named Michael Salti. An eccentric fellow, like many of these artists. I don't know much about him, to tell the truth; we can't insist on as many references as we used to, nowadays. He paid a year's rent in advance and he hasn't bothered anyone in the building, that's about all I can tell you."

"Well," Tarrant considered, "this performance *is* a little peculiar. How does he know we may not be trying to deliver an important message? How about his phone?"

"Tried it," Wicks answered. "The operator says there isn't any answer."

"I'm in favor of taking a peek. Look here, Gleeb, if you don't want to take the responsibility of breaking in, let us procure a ladder and have a look through the skylight. Ten to one that will pass unobserved; and if everything seems all right, we can simply sneak away."

To this proposal the manager consented, although it seemed to me that he did so most reluctantly. Possibly the eerie sounds that continued to issue through the closed door finally swayed him, for their quality, though difficult to convey, was certainly upsetting. In any event the ladder was brought and Tarrant himself mounted it, once it had been set in place. I saw him looking through the skylight, then leaning closer, peering intently through hands cupped about his eyes. Presently he straightened, and came down the ladder in some haste.

His face, when he stood beside us,

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was strained. "I think you should call the police," he grated. "At once. And wait till they get here before you go in."

"The police? But — what is it?"

"It's not pleasant," Tarrant said slowly. "I think it's murder."

Nor would he say anything further until the police, in the person of a traffic patrolman from Park Avenue, arrived. Then we all went in together, Gleeb's passkey having failed and the door being broken open.

The studio was a large, square room, and high, and the lamps which strangely enough were alight, illuminated it almost garishly. It was comfortably furnished in the modern note; an easel and a cabinet for paints and supplies stood on a hardwood floor which a soft rug did not completely cover. The question of the music was soon settled; in one corner was an electric victrola with an automatic arrangement for turning the record and starting it off again when it had reached its end. The record was of Palestrina's Requiem Mass, played by a well-known orchestra. Someone, I think it was Tarrant, crossed the room and turned it off, while we stood huddled near the door, gazing stupidly at the twisted, bloody figure on the couch.

It was that of a girl, altogether naked; although she was young — not older than twenty-two, certainly — her body was precociously voluptuous. One of her legs was contorted into a bent position, her mouth was awry, her left hand held a portion of the couch covering in an agonized clutch. Just beneath her left breast the hilt of a knife protruded shockingly. The bleeding had been copious.

It was Tarrant again who extinguished the four tall candles, set on the floor and burning at the corners of the couch. As he did so he murmured, "You will remember that the candles were burning at ten forty-seven, officer."

Then I was out on the terrace again, leaning heavily against the western parapet, while I gasped deep intakes of clear, cold air. I wasn't used to violence of this sort.

When I came back into the studio, a merciful blanket covered the girl's body. And for the first time I noticed the easel. It stood in the southeast corner of the room, diagonally opposite the couch and across the studio from the entrance doorway. It should have faced northwest, to receive the light from the big north window, and in fact the stool to its right indicated that position. But the easel had been partly turned, so that it faced southwest, toward the bedroom door, and one must walk almost to that door to observe its canvas.

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This, stretched tightly on it's frame, bore a painting in oil of the murdered girl. She was portrayed in a nude, half-crouching pose, her arms extended, and her features held a revoltingly lascivious leer. The portrait was entitled "La Seduction." In the identical place where the knife had pierced her actual body, a large nail had been driven through the web of the canvas. It was halfway through, the head protruding two inches on the opposite side of the picture; and a red gush of blood had been painted down the torso from the point where the nail entered.

Tarrant stood with his hands in his pockets, surveying this work of art. His gaze seemed focussed upon the nail, incongruous in its strange position and destined to play so large a part in the tragedy. He was murmuring to himself and his voice was so low that I scarcely caught his words.

"Madman's work. . . . But why is the easel turned away from the room. . . . Why is that? . . ."

It was midnight in Tarrant's apartment and much activity had gone forward. The Homicide Squad in charge of Lieutenant Mullins had arrived and unceremoniously ejected everyone else from the penthouse, Tarrant included. Thereupon he had called a friend at Headquarters and been assured of a visit from Deputy Inspector Peake, who would be in command of the case, a visit which had not yet eventuated.

'Hido, who was certainly an excellent butler, had immediately provided me with a fine bottle of Irish whiskey (Bushmill's, bottled in 1919). I was sipping my second highball and Tarrant was quietly reading across the room, when Inspector Peake rang the bell.

He advanced into the room with hand outstretched. "Mr. Tarrant, I believe? . . . Ah, glad to know you, Mr. Phelan." He was a tall, thin man in mufti, with a voice unexpectedly soft. I don't know why, but I was also surprised that a policeman should wear so well-cut a suit of tweeds. As he sank into a chair, he continued, "I understand you were among the first to enter the penthouse, Mr. Tarrant. But I'm afraid there isn't much to add now. The case is cut and dried."

"You have the murderer?"

"Not yet. But the drag-net is out. We shall have him, if not today, then tomorrow or the next day."

"The artist, I suppose?"

"Michael Salti, yes. An eccentric man, quite mad. . . . By the way, I must thank you for that point about the candles. In conjunction with the medical examiner's evi-

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dence it checked the murder definitely at between three and four P.M."

"There is no doubt, then, I take it, about the identity of the criminal."

"No," Peake asserted, "none at all. He was seen alone with his model at 12:50 P.M. by one of the apartment house staff and the elevator operators are certain no one was taken to the penthouse during the afternoon or evening. His fingerprints were all over the knife, the candlesticks, the victrola record. There was a lot more corroboration, too."

"And was he seen to leave the building after the crime?"

"No, he wasn't. That's the one missing link. But since he isn't here, he must have left. Perhaps by the fire-stairs; we've checked it and it's possible. . . . The girl is Barbara Brebant — a wealthy family." The inspector shook his head. "A wild one, though. She has played around with dubious artists from the Village and elsewhere for some years; gave most of 'em more than they could take, by all accounts. Young, too; made her debut only about a year ago. Apparently she had made something of a name for herself in the matter of viciousness; three of our men brought in the very same description — a vicious beauty."

"The old Roman type," Tarrant surmised. "Not so anachronistic in this town, at that. . . . Living with Salti?"

"No. She lived at home. When she bothered to go home. No one doubts, though, that she was Salti's mistress. And from what I've learned, when she was any man's mistress, he was pretty certain to be dragged through the mire. Salti, being mad, finally killed her."

"Yes, that clicks," Tarrant agreed. "The lascivious picture and the nail driven through it. Madmen, of course, act perfectly logically. He was probably a loose liver himself, but she showed him depths he had not suspected. Then remorse. His insanity taking the form of an absence of the usual values, he made her into a symbol of his own vice, through the painting, and then killed her, just as he mutilated the painting with the nail. . . . Yes, Salti is your man, all right."

Peake ground out a cigarette. "A nasty affair. But not especially mysterious. I wish all our cases were as simple." He was preparing to take his leave.

Tarrant also got up. He said, "Just a moment. There were one or two things —"

"Yes?"

"I wonder if I could impose upon you a little more, Inspector. Just to check some things I noticed tonight.

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Can I be admitted to the penthouse now?"

Peake shrugged, as if the request were a useless one, but took it with a certain good grace. "Yes, I'll take you up. All our men have left now, except a patrolman who will guard the premises until we make the arrest. I still have an hour to spare."

It was two hours, however, before they returned. The inspector didn't come in, but I caught Tarrant's parting words at the entrance. "You will surely assign another man to the duty tonight, won't you?" The policeman's reply sounded like a grunt of acquiescence.

I looked at my friend in amazement when he came into the lounge. His clothes, even his face, were covered with dirt; his nose was a long, black smudge. By the time he had bathed and changed into his pajamas, it was nearly dawn.

During the next few minutes Tarrant was unaccustomedly silent. Even after 'Hido had brought us a nightcap, he sat deep in thought, and in the light of the standing lamp behind him I thought his face wore a slight frown.

Presently he gave that peculiar whistle that summoned his man and the butler-valet appeared almost immediately from the passage to the kitchen. "Sit down, doctor," he spoke without looking up.

Doubtless a small shift in my posture expressed my surprise, for he continued, for my benefit, "I've told you that 'Hido is a doctor in his own country, a well educated man. When I wish his advice as a friend, I call him doctor — a title to which he is fully entitled. Usually I do it when I'm worried. . . . I'm worried now."

'Hido, meantime, had hoisted himself onto the divan, where he sat smiling and helping himself to one of Tarrant's Dimitrines. "Social custom, matter of convenience," he acknowledged. "Conference about what?"

"About this penthouse murder," said Tarrant without further ado. "You know the facts related by Inspector Peake. You heard them?"

"I listen. Part my job."

"Yes, well that portion is all right. Salti's the man. There's no mystery about that, not even interesting, in fact. But there's something else, something that isn't right. It stares you in the face but the police don't care. Their business is to arrest the murderer; they know who he is and they're out looking for him. That's enough for them. But there is a mystery up above, a real one. I'm not concerned with chasing crooks, but their own case won't hold unless this curious fact fits in. It is as strange as

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anything I've ever met."

'Hido's grin had faded; his face was entirely serious. "What this mystery?"

"It's the most perfect sealed room, or rather sealed house, problem ever reported. There was no way out and yet the man isn't there. No possibility of suicide; the fingerprints on the knife are only one element that rules that out. No, he was present all right. But where did he go, and how? . . . Listen carefully. I've checked this from my own observations, from the police investigations and from my later search with Peake.

"When we entered the penthouse tonight, Gleeb's passkey didn't suffice; we had to break the entrance door in because it was bolted on the inside by a strong bar. The walls of the studio are of brick and they have no windows except on the northern side where there is a sheer drop to the ground. The window there was fastened on the inside and the skylight was similarly fastened. The only other exit from the studio is the door to the bedroom. This was closed and the key turned in the lock; the key was on the studio side of the door.

"Yes, I know." Tarrant went on, apparently forestalling an interruption, "it is sometimes possible to turn a key in a lock from the wrong side, by means of a pair of pincers or some similar contrivance. That makes the bedroom, the lavatory and the kitchenette adjoining it, possibilities. There is no exit from any of them except by the windows. They were all secured from the inside and I am satisfied that they cannot be so secured by anybody already out of the penthouse."

He paused and looked over at 'Hido whose head nodded up and down as he made the successive points. "Two persons in penthouse when murder committed. One is victim, other is Salti man. After murder only victim is visible. One door, windows and skylight are only exits and they are all secured on inside. Cannot be secured from outside. Therefore, Salti man still in penthouse when you enter."

"But he wasn't there when we entered. The place was thoroughly searched. I was there then myself."

"Maybe trap door. Maybe space under floor or entrance to floor below."

"Yes," said Tarrant. "Well, now, get this. There are no trap doors in the flooring of the penthouse, there are none in the walls and there are not even any in the roof. I have satisfied myself of that with Peake. Gleeb, the manager who was on the spot when the penthouse was built, further assures me of it."

"Only place is floor," 'Hido in-

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sisted. "Salti man could make this himself."

"He couldn't make a trap door without leaving at least a minute crack," was Tarrant's counter. "At least I don't see how he could. The flooring of the studio is hard wood, the planks closely fitted together and I have been over every inch of it. Naturally there are cracks between the planks, lengthwise; but there are no transverse cracks anywhere. Gleeb has shown me the specifications of that floor. The planks are grooved together and it is impossible to raise any plank without splintering that grooving. From my own examination I am sure none of the planks has been, or can be, lifted.

"All this was necessary because there is a space of something like two and a half feet between the floor of the penthouse and the roof of the apartment building proper. One has to mount a couple of steps at the entrance of the penthouse. Furthermore I have been in part of this space. Let me make it perfectly clear how I got there.

"The bedroom adjoins the studio on the south, and the lavatory occupies the northwest corner of the bedroom. It is walled off, of course. Along the northern wall of the lavatory (which is part of the southern wall of the studio) is the bathtub; and the part of the flooring under the bathtub has been cut away, leaving an aperture to the space beneath."

I made my first contribution. "But how can that be? Wouldn't the bathtub fall through?"

"No. The bathtub is an old-fashioned one, installed by Salti himself only a few weeks ago. It is not flush with the floor, as they make them now, but stands on four legs. The flooring has only been cut away in the middle of the tub, say two or three planks, and the opening extended only to the outer edge of the tub. Not quite that far, in fact."

"There is Salti man's trap door," grinned 'Hido. "Not even door; just trap."

"So I thought," Tarrant agreed grimly. "But it isn't. Or if it is, he didn't use it. As no one could get through the opening without moving the tub — which hadn't been done, by the way — Peake and I pulled up some more of the cut planks and I squeezed myself into the space beneath the lavatory and bedroom. There was nothing there but dirt; I got plenty of that."

"How about space below studio?"

"Nothing doing. The penthouse is built on a foundation, as I said about two and a half feet high, of concrete building blocks. A line of these blocks runs underneath the penthouse, directly below the wall between the studio and bedroom. As

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the aperture in the floor is on the southern side of the wall, it is likewise to the south of the transverse line of building blocks in the foundation. The space beneath the studio is to the north of these blocks, and they form a solid wall that is impassable. I spent a good twenty minutes scrummaging along the entire length of it."

"Most likely place," 'Hido confided, "just where hole in lavatory floor."

"Yes, I should think so, too. I examined it carefully. I could see the ends of the planks that form the studio floor part way over the beam above the building blocks. But there isn't a trace of a loose block at that point, any more than there is anywhere else. . . . To make everything certain, we also examined the other three sides of the foundation of the bedroom portion of the penthouse. They are solid and haven't been touched since it was constructed. So the whole thing is just a cul-de-sac; there is no possibility of exit from the penthouse even through the aperture beneath the bathtub."

"You examine also foundations under studio part?"

"Yes, we did that, too. No result."

He looked at 'Hido long and searchingly and the other, after a pause, replied slowly, "Can only see this. Salti man construct this trap, probably for present use. Then he do not use. Must go some other way."

"But there *is* no other way."

"Then Salti man still there."

"He isn't there."

"Harumph," said 'Hido reflectively. It was evident that he felt the same respect for a syllogism that animated Tarrant; and was stopped, for the time being, at any rate. He went off on a new tack. "What else especially strange about setting?"

"There are two other things that strike me as peculiar," Tarrant answered, and his eyes narrowed. "On the floor, about one foot from the northern window, there is a fairly deep indentation in the floor of the studio. It is a small impression and is almost certainly made by a nail partly driven through the planking and then pulled up again."

I thought of the nail through the picture. "Could he have put the picture down on that part of the floor in order to drive the nail through it? But what if he did?"

"I can see no necessity for it, in any case. The nail would go through the canvas easily enough, just as it stood on the easel."

'Hido said, "With nail in plank, perhaps plank could be pulled up! You say no?"

"I tried it. Even driving the nail in sideways, instead of vertically, as the original indentation was made,

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the plank can't be lifted at all."

"O. K. You say some other thing strange, also."

"Yes. The position of the easel that holds the painting of the dead girl. When we broke in this morning, it was turned away from the room, toward the bedroom door, so that the picture was scarcely visible even from the studio entrance, let alone the rest of the room. I don't believe that was the murderer's intention. He had set the rest of the stage too carefully. The requiem; the candles. It doesn't fit; I'm sure he meant the first person who entered to be confronted by the whole scene, and especially by that symbolic portrait. It doesn't accord even with the position of the stool, which agrees with the intended position of the easel. It doesn't fit at all with the mentality of the murderer. It seems a small thing but I'm sure it's important. I'm certain the position of the easel is an important clue."

"To mystery of disappearance?"

"Yes. To the mystery of the murderer's escape from that sealed room."

"Not see how," 'Hido declared, after some thought. As for me, I couldn't even appreciate the suggestion of any connection.

"Neither do I," grated Tarrant. He had risen and begun to pace the floor. "Well, there you have it all. A little hole in the floor near the north window, an easel turned out of position and a sealed room without an occupant who certainly ought to be there. . . . There's an answer to this; damn it, there must be an answer."

Suddenly he glanced at an electric clock on the table he was passing and stopped abruptly. "My word," he exclaimed, "it's nearly five o'clock. Didn't mean to keep you up like this, Jerry. You either, doctor. Well, the conference is over. We've got nowhere."

'Hido was on his feet, in an instant once more the butler. "Sorry could not help. You wish night-cap, Misster Tarrant?"

"No. Bring the scotch. And a siphon. And ice. I'm not turning in."

I had been puzzling my wits without intermission over the problem above, and the break found me more tired than I had realized. I yawned prodigiously. I made a half-hearted attempt to persuade Tarrant to come to bed but it was plain that he would have none of it.

I said, "Good-night, 'Hido. I'm no good for anything until I get a little sleep . . . Night, Tarrant."

I left him once more pacing the floor; his face, in the last glimpse I had of it, was set in the stern lines of thought.

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It seemed no more than ten seconds after I got into bed that I felt my shoulder being shaken and, through the fog of sleep, heard 'Hido's hissing accents. "— Misster Tarrant just come from penthouse. He excited. Maybe you wish wake up." As I rolled out and shook myself free from slumber, I noticed that my wrist watch pointed to six-thirty.

When I had thrown on some clothes and come into the living-room, I found Tarrant standing with the telephone instrument to his head, his whole posture one of grimness. Although I did not realize it at once, he had been endeavoring for some time to reach Deputy Inspector Peake. He accomplished this finally a moment or so after I reached the room.

"Hello, Peake? Inspector Peake? This is Tarrant. How many men did you leave to guard that penthouse last night? . . . What, only one? But I said two, man. Damn it all, I don't make suggestions like that for amusement! . . . All right, there's nothing to be accomplished arguing about it. You'd better get here, and get here pronto. . . . That's all I'll say." He slammed down the receiver viciously.

I had never before seen Tarrant upset; my surprise was a measure of his own disturbance, which resembled consternation. He paced the floor, muttering below his breath, his long legs carrying him swiftly up and down the apartment. ". . . Damned fools . . . everything must fit. . . . Or else. . . ." For once I had sense enough to keep my questions to myself for the time being.

Fortunately I had not long to wait. Hardly had 'Hido had opportunity to brew some coffee, with which he appeared somewhat in the manner of a dog wagging its tail deprecatingly, than Peake's ring sounded at the entrance. He came in hurriedly, but his smile, as well as his words, indicated his opinion that he had been roused by a false alarm.

"Well, well, Mr. Tarrant, what *is* this trouble over?"

Tarrant snapped, "Your man's gone. Disappeared. How do you like that?"

"The patrolman on guard?" The policeman's expression was incredulous.

"The *single* patrolman you left on guard."

Peake stepped over to the telephone, called Headquarters. After a few brief words he turned back to us, his incredulity at Tarrant's statement apparently confirmed.

"You must be mistaken, sir," he asserted. "There have been no reports from Officer Weber. He would never leave the premises without reporting such an occasion."

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Tarrant's answer was purely practical. "Come and see."

And when we reached the terrace on the building's roof, there was, in fact, no sign of the patrolman who should have been at his station. We entered the penthouse and, the lights having been turned on, Peake himself made a complete search of the premises. While Tarrant watched the proceedings in a grim silence, I walked over to the north window of the studio, gray in the early morning light, and sought for the nail hole he had mentioned as being in the floor. There it was, a small indentation, about an inch deep, in one of the hard wood planks. This, and everything else about the place appeared just as Tarrant had described it to us some hours before, previous to my turning in. I was just in time to see Peake emerge from the enlarged opening in the lavatory floor, dusty and sorely puzzled.

"Our man is certainly not here," the inspector acknowledged. "I cannot understand it. This is a serious breach of discipline."

"Hell," said Tarrant sharply, speaking for the first time since we had come to the roof. "This is a serious breach of intelligence, not discipline."

"I shall broadcast an immediate order for the detention of Patrolman Weber." Peake stepped into the bedroom and approached the phone to carry out his intention.

"You needn't broadcast it. I have already spoken to the night operator in the lobby on the ground floor. He told me a policeman left the building in great haste about 3:30 this morning. If you will have the local precinct check up on the all-night lunch rooms along Lexington Avenue in this vicinity, you will soon pick up the first step of the trail that man left. . . . You will probably take my advice, now that it is too late."

Peake did so, putting the call through at once; but his bewilderment was no whit lessened. Nor was mine. As he put down the instrument, he said, "All right. But it doesn't make sense. Why should he leave his post without notifying us? And why should he go to a lunch room?"

"Because he was hungry."

"But —. There has been a crazy murderer here already. And now Weber, an ordinary cop, if I ever saw one. Does this place make everybody mad?"

"Not as mad as you're going to be in a minute. But perhaps you weren't using the word in that sense?"

Peake let it pass. "Everything," he commented slowly, "is just as we left it last night. Except for Weber's disappearance."

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"Is that so?" Tarrant led us to the entrance from the roof to the studio and pointed downwards. The light was now bright enough to disclose an unmistakable spattering of blood on one of the steps before the door. "That blood wasn't there when we left last night. I came up here about five-thirty, the moment I got onto this thing," he continued bitterly. "Of course I was too late. . . . Damnation, let us make an end to this farce. I'll show you some more things that have altered during the night."

We followed him into the studio again as he strode over to the easel with its lewd picture, opposite the entrance. He pointed to the nail still protruding through the canvas. "I don't know how closely you observed the hole made in this painting by the nail yesterday. But it's a little larger now and the edges are more frayed. In other words the nail has been removed and once more inserted."

I turned about to find that Gleeb, somehow appraised of the excitement, had entered the penthouse and now stood a little behind us. Tarrant acknowledged his presence with a curt nod; and in the air of tension that his tenant was building up the manager ventured no questions.

"Now," Tarrant continued, pointing out the locations as he spoke, "possibly they have dried, but when I first got here this morning, there was a trail of moist spots still leading from the entrance doorway to the vicinity of the north window. You will find that they were places where a trail of blood had been wiped away with a wet cloth."

He turned to the picture beside him and withdrew the nail, pulling himself up as if for a repugnant job. He walked over to the north window and motioned us to take our places on either side of him. Then he bent down and inserted the nail, point first, into the indentation in the plank, as firmly as he could. He braced himself and apparently strove to pull the nail toward the south, away from the window.

I was struggling with an obvious doubt. I said, "But you told us the planks could not be lifted."

"Can't," Tarrant grunted. "But they can be *slid*."

Under his efforts the plank was, in fact, sliding. Its end appeared from under the footboard at the base of the north wall below the window and continued to move over a space of several feet. When this had been accomplished, he grasped the edges of the planks on both sides of the one already moved and slid them back also. An opening quite large enough to squeeze through, was revealed.

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But that was not all. The crumpled body of a man lay just beneath; the man was clad only in underwear and was obviously dead from the beating in of his head.

As we bent over, gasping at the unexpectedly gory sight, Gleeb suddenly cried, "But that is not Michael Salti! What is this, a murder farm? I don't know this man.

Inspector Peake's voice was ominous with anger. "I do. That is the body of Officer Weber. But how could he —"

Tarrant had straightened up and was regarding us with a look that said plainly he was anxious to get an unpleasant piece of work finished. "It was simple enough," he ground out. "Salti cut out the planks beneath the bathtub in the lavatory so that *these* planks in the studio could be slid back over the beam along the foundation under the south wall; their farther ends in this position will now be covering the hole in the lavatory floor. The floor here is well fitted and the planks are grooved, thus making the sliding possible. They can be moved back into their original position by someone in the space below here; doubtless we shall find a small block nailed to the under portion of all three planks for that purpose.

"He murdered his model, set the scene and started his phonograph, which will run interminably on the electric current. Then he crawled into his hiding place. The discovery of the crime could not be put off any later than the electrician's visit to fix the aerial.

"When the place was searched and the murderer not discovered, his pursuit passed elsewhere, while he himself lay concealed here all night. It was even better than doubling back upon his tracks, for he had never left the starting post. Eventually, of course, he had to get out, but by that time the vicinity of this building would be the last place in which he was being searched for.

"This morning he pushed back the planks from underneath and came forth. I don't know whether he had expected anyone to be left on guard, but that helped rather than hindered him. Creeping up upon the unsuspecting guard he knocked him out — doubtless with that mallet I can just see beside the body — and beat him to death. Then he put his second victim in the hiding place, returning the instrument that closes it from above, the nail, to its position in the painting. He had already stripped off his own clothes, which you will find down in that hole, and in the officer's uniform and coat he found no difficulty in leaving the building. His first action was to hurry to a lunch room, naturally,

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since after a day and a night without food under the floor here, he must have been famished. I have no doubt that your man will get a report of him along Lexington Avenue, Peake; but even so, he now has some hours' start on you."

"We'll get him," Peake assured us. "But if you knew all this, why in heaven's name didn't you have this place opened up last night, before he had any chance to commit a second murder? We should have taken him red-handed."

"Yes, but I didn't know it last night," Tarrant reminded him. "It was not until early this morning that I had any proper opportunity to examine the penthouse. What I found was a sealed room and a sealed house. There was no exit that had not been blocked nor, after our search, could I understand how the man could still be in the penthouse. On the other hand I could not understand how it was possible that he had left. As a precaution, in case he were still here in some manner I had not fathomed, I urged you to leave at least two men on guard, and it was my understanding that you agreed. I think it is obvious, although I was unable then to justify myself, that the precaution was called for."

Peake said, "It was."

"I have been up all night working this out. What puzzled me completely was the absence of any trap doors. Certainly we looked for them thoroughly. But it was there right in front of us all the time; we even investigated a portion of it, the aperture in the lavatory floor, which we supposed to be a trap door itself, although actually it was only a part of the real arrangement. As usual the trick was based upon taking advantage of habits of thought, of our habitized notion of a trap door as something that is lifted or swung back. I have never heard before of a trap door that slides back. Nevertheless, that was the simple answer, and it took me until five-thirty to reach it."

'Hido whom for the moment I had forgotten completely, stirred uneasily and spoke up. "I not see, Misster Tarrant, how you reach answer then."

"Four things," was the reply. "First of all, the logical assumption that, since there was no way out, the man was still here. As to the mechanism by which he managed to remain undiscovered, three things. We mentioned them last night. First, the nail hole in the plank; second, the position of the easel; third, the hole in the lavatory floor. I tried many ways to make them fit together, for I felt sure they must *all* fit.

"It was the position of the easel

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that finally gave me the truth. You remember we agreed that it was wrong, that the murderer had never intended to leave it facing away from the room. But if no one had entered until we did and still its position was wrong, what could have moved it in the meantime? Except for the phonograph, which could scarcely be responsible, the room held nothing but motionless objects. *But if the floor under one of its legs had moved, the easel would have been slid around.* That fitted with the other two items, the nail hole in the plank, the opening under the bathtub.

"The moment it clicked, I got an automatic and ran up here. I was too late. As I said, I've been up all night. I'm tired; I'm going to bed."

He walked off without another word, scarcely with a parting nod. Tarrant, as I know now, did not often fail. He was a man who offered few excuses for himself, and he was humiliated.

It was a week or so later when I had an opportunity to ask him if Salti had been captured. I had seen nothing of it in the newspapers, and the case had now passed to the back pages with the usual celerity of sensations.

Tarrant said, "I don't know."

"But haven't you followed it up with that man, Peake?"

"I'm not interested. It's nothing but a straight police case now."

He stopped and added after an appreciable pause, "Damn it, Jerry, I don't like to think of it even now. I've blamed the stupidity of the police all I can; their throwing me out when I might have made a real investigation that evening; that delay; then the negligence in overlooking my suggestion for a pair of guards, which I made as emphatic as I could. But it's no use. I should have solved it in time, even so. There could only be that one answer and I took too long to find it.

"The human brain works too slowly, Jerry, even when it works straight. . . . It works too slowly."

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Did you know that Quentin Reynolds, the famous sports writer who has become an even more famous war correspondent, once wrote detective stories? In "The Man Who Dreamed Too Much," Mr. Reynolds invites you to be an invisible guest at a very select dinner party. You will meet a German ace of the first World War, a French Ambassador, the world's greatest psychiatrist, the richest man in America, and a munitions king. Not interested? Well, suppose you heard the German war ace remark casually, even before the guests had assembled: "I may have to murder a man." Ah, that's a different story, isn't it? And that's exactly what it is — a different story.

THE MAN WHO DREAMED TOO MUCH

by QUENTIN REYNOLDS

"I MAY HAVE to murder a man," Baron Von Genthner said very softly. I looked up, but he wasn't smiling. He was standing there, slim, straight, every inch the German aristocrat.

Since the war Von Genthner had spent most of his time with his music and his science. I could think of none less liable to harbour thoughts of murder. And our conversation had started so innocently, too.

"The American, Fulton Kramer, arrives in Berlin on Monday," he had begun. "Why not have a dinner party for him?"

I had laughed, "Kramer is probably the richest man in America, Von Genthner. He is hardly likely to accept a dinner invitation from a foreign newspaper correspondent he doesn't know."

"Yes, he'll accept." Von Genthner lit a cigarette. "In fact," he added calmly, "he has accepted already. He phoned me from Vienna this morning. This, really, is *my* dinner party. I merely want you to hold it at your flat. By the way, here's the menu."

He handed me a menu which made me gasp. "Caviare, Consommé aux Nids d'Hirondelle, Filet de Sole Regence, Barquettes d'Ecre Suprême d'Agneau. . . . Von Genthner, I'm a newspaper man, not an oil magnate like Kramer. . . . Château Loudenne, Enkirschner Steffensberg Moselle, 1921, Perrier Jouet, 1921; Hine's Brandy, 1875. . . ."

"It is a good dinner, isn't it?" Von Genthner smiled. "As a matter of fact, it's the same dinner that Sir Austen Chamberlain gave at Locarno a few months ago. The French Ambassador gave me a copy of the menu. He, incidentally, will be one of our guests. And, by the way, the cost of the dinner does not matter. I will take care of that. My friend," he added slowly, "if this dinner turns

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out as we hope it will, no possible cost would be excessive. And here is our guest list."

He handed me a list of six men and I sat down weakly. In addition to my name and Von Genthner's, there was Henri Beaumont, the French Ambassador to Germany; Heinrich Hoben, the munitions king, probably Germany's wealthiest man; Dr. Gerhardt Schuler, the so-called wizard of the mind, undoubtedly the world's greatest psychiatrist, the man who began where Freud and Jung ended; and then there was Fulton Kramer.

"There's lots of dynamite mixed up here, Von Genthner," I said. "Whatever can the French Ambassador, Germany's largest maker of munitions, America's wealthiest man and a great psychiatrist have in common?"

"They all knew Mordaunt Kramer well. Mordaunt Kramer was a very great man, a very great friend of us all. He died just seven years ago, seven years ago next Wednesday. Let us say that this dinner is in memory of him. He, you know, was Fulton Kramer's older brother. During the war Mordaunt Kramer served with the French army. I won't go into details, but he saved the life of Henri Beaumont at the risk of his own. Afterwards he and Beaumont were inseparable, like two brothers. Heinrich Hoben? Hoben was educated in America. He and Mordaunt Kramer were college friends, and later Mordaunt married his sister."

"Was Mordaunt Kramer a friend of Gerhardt Schuler, too?"

"When Mordaunt died it was discovered he had left Schuler twenty thousand pounds in his will," Von Genthner said softly.

"They must have been friends. But, Von Genthner" — I looked at him steadily — "there's something else here. I have a feeling that this is a very important dinner."

Von Genthner looked at me for a moment, and it was then that he said, "I may have to murder a man."

"You may have to murder a man?" I stared at him.

He turned to me sharply. "It is a dreadful thing to say, but apart from Hoben you are the only man in Germany I can trust completely. We are good friends. Now I put your friendship to a test. For certain reasons I want to hold this dinner at your flat. I have assured my friends who are to be our guests that you are the most discreet man in Berlin. You and I have been through some interesting times, friend, have we not?"

I nodded. I had known Von Genthner for several years and no two men could be closer.

"Now leave all the details to me," he went on. "All you know is that

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you are giving a dinner for Fulton Kramer. Kramer is very much interested in psychoanalysis, and he is thinking of endowing a college of mental research here in Berlin. Naturally he wants to consult Gerhardt Schuler. That accounts for Schuler's presence at the dinner. The French Ambassador is a friend of Kramer's, and so are Hoben and myself. So forget all I have said except that. My servants will take charge that night if you don't mind. Not," he added hastily, "that I don't trust your excellent Martha, but she should have a night off now and then. And now, friend, auf wiedersehen."

"Wiedersehen," I mumbled; and he was gone, leaving me with a lot of jumbled thoughts.

Von Genthner dropped in on the afternoon of the dinner to make final arrangements. He was as much at home in a kitchen as he was in a laboratory. He could talk about a mushroom sauce to a cook just as he could talk about a Beethoven symphony to Toscanini. He could taste a wine and tell its origin as he could dissect the esoteric philosophy of a Schopenhauer.

"And now" — he rubbed his hands together in satisfaction — "I think everything is ready. Yes, it will be a dinner worthy of Mordaunt Kramer's memory."

"How did he die?" I asked idly.

"That," Von Genthner said slowly, "is what we expect to find out tonight."

"I remember his death vaguely. Didn't he fall or leap from his hotel window here in Berlin?"

"Yes . . . yes." Von Genthner changed the subject quickly. "Instead of cocktails we will have sherry. I have brought this one bottle. It will be enough. Our guests are all moderate drinkers. . . . I have told our guests that nothing which happens to-night shall go beyond the confines of your dining-room."

"All right, I won't talk. After that dinner I probably won't be able to talk. By the way, we wear black ties, I suppose?"

Von Genthner threw up his hands in horror. "Black ties, indeed! Here we have four of the world's most important men to dinner and you won't even dress for them. We wear white ties and tails, of course."

Promptly at seven-thirty the bell rang, and one of Von Genthner's wooden-faced servants announced solemnly, "The Baron Ludwig Von Genthner and Herr Fulton Kramer."

Fulton Kramer looked exactly like his pictures, which was a bit of a surprise. Tall, broad-shouldered, clean-shaven, he was the motion-picture conception of an industrial magnate.

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He was a very big man, and when one shook hands with him and felt the straight gaze of his steady eye one realized that here was one out of the ordinary. Then he smiled and spoke and the impression was gone. He was merely a quiet, very soft-spoken gentleman.

"Nice of you to have this dinner," he said.

Just then a servant appeared with a tray on which there was an enormous bowl of caviare embedded in a block of ice. And on the tray was that bottle of sherry and several glasses.

It was at this moment that Von Genthner's man announced sonorously, "His Excellency the French Ambassador."

I had interviewed Beaumont a dozen times and he remembered me. An amazing diplomat, Beaumont, one of the most able in Europe. He was everything that a diplomat usually is not. Huge, with a mass of black hair that was constantly tumbling down over his forehead; his moustache was untidy and his large brown eyes were constantly twinkling. A great gourmet and raconteur, Monsieur Beaumont would talk—even to newspapermen—by the hour. But when he finished one realized that he had only been charming—not informative. He was much like Litvinoff, the Russian.

While he was greeting Von Genthner and Kramer, Herr Heinrich Hoben was announced. Hoben was a real mystery man. He had never been interviewed, never photographed. He was slim and spare, and his closely cropped head, his monocle, and the duelling scar on his cheek all combined to make him look the typical Prussian.

"It is nice to be among friends again," he said rather strangely, and turning to me, "Von Genthner says you are his best friend. That means that I am at your service."

"You will serve me best by sampling this sherry." I poured five glasses, and the servant who had been hovering about passed them round.

"But this is treason," Beaumont exploded, "giving a Frenchman sherry, a Spanish wine."

"The French wines are too important to drink before dinner," I told him. "We need them to embellish my poor food."

"And this," Von Genthner said very softly, "this is a very special sherry. Look at the label."

Beaumont, Hoben, and Fulton Kramer looked at the bottle. Kramer drew a sharp breath. Suddenly they were all strangely quiet.

"It is the only wine he ever drank," Kramer said softly. "Manzanilla,

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1875, a fine sherry, and how thoughtful of you, Von Genthner."

"Just before he . . . he . . . shall I say died? Just before he died he gave me a case of it. I thought tonight we might drink a toast to him."

We raised our glasses. Hoben's face was set in an immobile mask. The Ambassador straightened his huge frame and sadness replaced the laughter in his eyes. Kramer's hand shook and a few drops spilled over his glass.

"To my brother, whom we all loved in life and whose memory we revere in death," Kramer's voice was softer than ever. "Soon we may drink another toast to you, my brother. Soon we may drink to you and say, 'Brother, you have been avenged.' "

There was a moment of silence as we drank. There was something tremendous in the room now. I sensed it without knowing what it was.

Then, "Herr Doktor Gerhardt Schuler," the butler announced, and the spell, the spectre of something which had insinuated itself into the room, vanished, and again there were four cultured, smiling men greeting a distinguished guest. Von Genthner introduced Dr. Schuler to us all.

Schuler was truly a great man. He had studied with Freud and then with Adler and Jung, and he had used their knowledge and experience as a springboard from which he jumped far out into the mighty expanse of the subconscious mind. He was rather short and plump and everything about him was tidy. Often I have been able to tell a man's character by two things — his hands and his eyes. Schuler had very grey and very steady eyes which almost met under thin eyebrows, but his hands were thin and soft and they were never quiet. It was as though they were the reflection of an extraordinarily active mind that just could not relax. The hands contradicted the eyes. He had a short pointed black beard, and his age, I imagined, was about fifty.

"So decent of you to come," Kramer smiled. "I am interested in your subject and have been thinking of endowing a college of mental research in Berlin. After all, you are the leading psychiatrist of our age. It seems ridiculous that Vienna should be the capital of mental research and not Berlin."

"Some of my colleagues in Vienna might not agree," Schuler smiled. Schuler had a lovely voice, a beautiful voice, if the voice of a man can be so appraised. It had a soothing quality. The most ridiculous thought occurred to me. What a great radio announcer this man would have made!

"You have done a marvellous

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thing, Doctor," Kramer said. "You have dragged the subconscious mind out of its hiding-place and into the open where we can see it. You are never afraid of anything you can see."

"I have tried to banish fear," Schuler nodded.

"In America we have always thought of psychoanalysis and psychiatry as a sort of witchcraft until you came along. But you made the subconscious mind a friendly little thing that we can understand," Kramer told him.

The scientist seemed quite pleased. "A friendly little thing, that is good, that is very good, Mr. Kramer."

Dinner was announced, and we trooped into the dining-room. There is a large crystal chandelier over my table and it twinkled a welcome, and then the light from it shone down whitely on a really distinguished-looking gathering.

Course followed course and we chatted of many things. Eventually the Ambassador turned to Hoben. "A French journalist tells me an interesting thing, Hoben. He tells me that every typewriter factory in Germany is manufacturing machine-guns."

"That is true," Hoben said solemnly. "I hear that a French journalist bought a German typewriter and that it fired eighty shots to the minute — all directed against the Rhineland."

Von Genthner laughed. "War . . . war . . . everyone talks of war. I think war is just an idle dream."

Hoben broke in smoothly, "Dreams are in the province of Dr. Schuler. If war is a dream he should know about it."

"War isn't a dream," Schuler laughed. "War is a nightmare."

"Dreams are amazing things," Von Genthner smiled. "We used to think them the result of eating too much. Now people like you use them to cure all sorts of mental disturbances, don't you, Doctor?"

"Not to cure so much as to find out what is wrong," Schuler smiled. "A dream itself is not so important — it is only important in that it is a reflection of something hidden in the subconscious. That is important."

He spoke slowly, in perfect but unfamiliar English which out of deference to Fulton Kramer we were all using. Slowly, caressingly, carefully, his beautiful voice flowed across the table seeming to fill every corner of the room. I felt a touch of tension which hadn't been there before. I felt somehow that everything that had gone before was merely part of a well-laid plan that was reaching its culmination. How had the conversation come round to this talk of

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dreams? It seemed a bit too pat to have been accidental.

I looked round the table. Had the lines about Kramer's jaw tightened a bit? Had Ambassador Beaumont's eyes lost their twinkle? Was Hoben leaning forward a bit farther than he had been, and what was that expression in his eyes? They were all looking at Dr. Schuler. If there was a feeling of tension in the room, certainly Dr. Schuler and Von Genthner were free from it. Von Genthner was smiling gently and casually polishing his monocle.

Servants brought in dishes, removed them, brought in wine, took away empty bottles, and we ate and drank appreciatively — all but Dr. Schuler, who hardly touched his food and who drank nothing at all. And his voice went on, a slight soft accent, adding something to it.

"To explain psychoanalysis and the interpretation of dreams," he went on, "let us use an analogy. Take this glass of wine in front of me. I read the label. I see that it is a claret, Loudenne. Still that doesn't tell me an awful lot. Anyone can put a Château Loudenne label on a wine bottle. Now I taste the wine." He sipped it slowly, then turned to me apologetically. "I have a rather bad heart, and my physicians tell me that I should not drink at all; that is why I cannot do justice to your wine.

"Now I know a great deal about the wine. I can peer behind the label. I know that the wine has been bottled at the Château Loudenne, an old and beautiful château on the west side of the estuary of the Gironde some thirty-five miles north of Bordeaux at the juncture of the Haut and Bas Médoc. The wine itself is merely the reflection of the grapes which mothered it — just as a dream is the reflection of the hidden thoughts lying in the subconscious mind."

"And this is what you call psychoanalysis," Kramer interposed. "Never before have I thought of psychoanalysing a bottle of wine."

"Freud calls it psychoanalysis," Gerhardt Schuler laughed. "Adler calls it individual psychology. Jung calls it analytical psychology. Any term will do — it all means the same thing. Our science is that science which allows us an access to the subconscious mind."

Now and then Von Genthner or Kramer threw in a question. Hoben still sat there leaning forward, immobile. The Ambassador was hunched forward, too, his eyes never leaving Schuler's face. The *corbeille de fruits* came and went and we sipped champagne. Perrier Jouet, 1921. As Dr. Schuler spoke, I was suddenly conscious that except for his voice we were surrounded by utter silence.

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There wasn't a sound from the kitchen.

"But just what do dreams prove?" Von Genthner insisted — a bit rudely, I thought.

"What does the front of a house prove?" Schuler answered suavely. "It doesn't actually tell you what is inside the house — but it gives a good indication. Freud always speaks of the dream façade, and I agree with him. He would be very much annoyed," Schuler added dryly, "to find me agreeing with him. He means that the dream is merely the façade of our mental house. Behind the dream is our subconscious mind. We must get behind that dream to see what it hides."

"But how?" Kramer asked. "How can a man even as gifted as you peer behind that dream, discovering fears and inhibitions, to see what is really troubling the mind, and how can you throw out those fears and those dark thoughts which apparently cause most dreams?"

"It is not always easy," Schuler admitted. "There are certain dreams which always indicate, for instance, a fear of the dark. Some early childhood experience about the dark has entered the subconscious mind of a man. He himself is hardly conscious of this fear. His dreams reveal it to us. Then I set to work to cure his subconscious mind of this fear."

"But how?" Von Genthner asked.

Schuler shrugged his shoulders and brought the fingers of his thin hands together. "There are many ways. I find hypnotism the best method. It may sound melodramatic but I actually hypnotize a man out of this fear of the dark. By hypnosis — a very loose term, incidentally, I mean this. I put his conscious mind to sleep and then talk to his subconscious mind. I convince his subconscious mind that it has no need to fear the dark, and gradually the subconscious gets that thought across to the conscious mind. Then the patient is cured."

"You wield a strange power, Doctor," Hoben said, speaking for the first time. "When you have a man hypnotized you can convince his subconscious mind of almost anything."

Schuler hesitated. "Yes . . . yes," he said slowly. "I suppose that is right. But, of course, I am only a doctor — a doctor of the mind — and my province is curing. A psychoanalyst really widens the scope of the conscious."

"I had a dream the other night that was strangely exhilarating," Von Genthner broke in, laughing. "I, who never dream, dreamed that night that I was climbing, climbing up into the ether. There was nothing but air supporting me and yet I kept

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on going upwards, and the higher I climbed the greater was my feeling of exhilaration and happiness. What, for instance, does that dream mean, Schuler, if anything?"

"That's one of the most common dreams in my experience," Schuler laughed. "If the same dream occurs again and again, look out, Von Genthner. Your subconscious mind for some reason or other has a wild desire to leap out into space. So long as your conscious mind can control that hidden desire no harm will come, but if the dream comes back it means that your subconscious mind is getting the upper hand. Then, Von Genthner, stay away from high places. Stay away, Von Genthner, from high places."

There was a sharp tinkle of broken glass. Hoben was peering at the broken stem of his wine glass. There wasn't a trace of colour in his face. His eyes were as cold as the crystals on the chandelier above us. Now the room was charged with something electric. I looked at Monsieur Beaumont. He was leaning forward looking at Schuler, and at the moment the jovial face was gone and he reminded me of a huge spider that is about to leap at a fly. He wasn't the genial diplomat now. Fulton Kramer, too, was staring at Gerhardt Schuler, and his eyes showed that he was looking at something which his mind told him was loathsome. Only Von Genthner's expression remained unchanged. A small smile played round the corners of his mouth, but his eyes weren't smiling. Wordlessly he went on polishing his monocle on his napkin.

Gerhardt Schuler looked from one to another. Now he, too, realized that something was wrong. His thin soft hands fluttered nervously. "But, gentlemen . . . gentlemen . . . why . . . why . . . are you looking at me so strangely?"

"You didn't tell my brother to stay away from high places." Kramer's voice was hardly audible, but in it there was a note that showed the inherent strength of the man.

Hoben straightened up. He was every inch the Prussian officer now.

"We have learned enough, my friend." The words dropped on the table metallically. "We have a duty to perform. Come, Kramer, tell Gerhardt Schuler a story that he well knows already. Tell him of how your brother, our friend, met his death."

"But, gentlemen," Schuler laughed uncertainly, but his eyes remained steady. "I do not . . ."

"Quiet, please," Hoben's voice snapped. "Go on, Kramer."

"My brother, Mordaunt Kramer, died seven years ago to-night," Kramer began. He took two faded letters from his pocket. "I was in New

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York when he died, and on that day I received a letter from him. I had received another just a week previously. Here are the letters. I won't bother reading them all."

The room was absolutely quiet. Not even the rumble of the street traffic seeped through to my dining-room. Kramer began very softly, but as he went on the tempo of his words quickened and his voice rose.

"Seven years ago my brother was in Berlin," he went on. "He had been working hard, very hard, and an inevitable reaction set in. He couldn't sleep, and when he did sleep his sleep was broken by dreams. He had occasional dizzy spells, but his physician told him that organically he was absolutely sound. Yet he was close to a nervous breakdown. He was advised to consult you, Dr. Schuler, and he did.

"He told you of one recurring dream that bothered him. It was a dream in which he was climbing a mountain, and in his dream he reached the top, then soared out into the air climbing higher and higher. Sometimes it was from a roof top that he soared, sometimes from a balcony; but invariably there was this climbing upwards into the air above.

"You told him, and quite rightly, I'll admit, that this was merely the protest that his subconscious mind was making against the driving that he had been giving it of late. He had, let us say, what we laymen call a common case of nerves — the kind that a long rest will cure. But you did not recommend a long rest. You recommended psychoanalysis. Yes, it is here in the letter, Doctor. Mordaunt and I were very close, and he told me almost every detail of your treatment.

"You used hypnotism on my brother. Within a week he felt better. He was able to sleep, but only after you had soothed him, after you had, to use your own words, put his conscious mind to sleep. He became enthusiastic about your treatment. He tried to force money on you. Mordaunt was one of the world's wealthiest men, and he was generous, too. But you refused his money. You told him that it was satisfaction enough for you to make a convert of him, a convert to psychoanalysis."

Schuler broke in and his lovely voice was pitched higher than it had been. "Yes, I had forgotten it. I gave your brother one or two treatments. I felt very badly when he ——"

"Quiet!" Hoben's voice was full of menace.

"Then one day," Kramer went on, "my brother suggested to you that he would like to give something to help mental research. He suggested that he leave you twenty thousand pounds in his will, and you very

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casually agreed. My brother wrote to me enclosing a codicil to his will, asking me to execute it. I submit, Dr. Schuler, that by this time you had the subconscious mind of my brother thoroughly under your control. As you have explained to us, it is possible for the subconscious mind absolutely to dominate the conscious. I submit, Doctor Schuler, that you implanted into his subconsciousness the idea of leaving you twenty thousand pounds. Once you learned that he had done that you changed your treatment.

"You encouraged his subconscious mind in its mad desire to leap into space. Under hypnosis you fostered this desire, until it became almost uncontrollable. Shall I read just a paragraph or two from my brother's last letter?"

Kramer picked up the letter. "'This past week, after being on the verge of a complete cure,' he read, 'I have had a relapse. I wake up at night and find myself looking down into the street from my window. The street below seems to fascinate me. Dr. Schuler tells me that this is but the last fight my subconscious mind is making for control. Within a week, he tells me, I shall be completely cured. I trust him completely, brother — he has a soothing voice, and when I listen to it I drop right off to sleep. Sometimes it seems to be that his voice continues in my sleep. I hear it faintly, but that I imagine is just a fancy. He began the last phase of my treatment to-day. He has told me to look out of my window just before I retire, to stare down into the street below. The prospect, I admit, frightens me a bit, but he says that the only way to overcome this fear of high places, this desire to jump and those occasional dizzy spells, is to fight against them. To-night I will do as he says.'"

Kramer stopped. I looked at Schuler. His face gleamed white under the brightness of the chandelier. He passed a thin hand across his brow and then stared at the moisture on it.

"That night he did as you told him to do," Kramer went on. "That night he leaned over the window-sill. Then? Then that thought you had implanted in his consciousness grew and grew like a fire in a wooden house. I can visualize him leaning over that window staring at the street below, trying desperately, bravely, to overcome this horrible thought which was paralysing his consciousness. Then you know what happened. He fell, and a moment later the world had lost a great man, a man who had not a single fault."

"He had just one fault, Kramer," Von Genthner said softly. "He was a man who dreamed too much."

"Will you continue, Von Genth-

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ner?" Kramer's voice trembled just a bit.

"Gerhardt Schuler," Von Genthner said, and his voice might have been that of a schoolmaster, so devoid of emotion was it; yes, or the voice of a judge pronouncing sentence, "we accuse you of the murder of Mordaunt Kramer."

"You are mad . . . mad!" Schuler's hands went out, palms upstretched. "This is ridiculous."

"Murder is never ridiculous," Hoben said in his clipped, accented voice. "Sometimes it is sad, as in Mordaunt Kramer's case. Sometimes it is necessary, as in your case."

Schuler's mouth worked under his dark tidy beard. His eyes widened, and for the first time fear showed through those two windows of the heart which we call the eyes.

"At one time or another during his lifetime," Von Genthner continued, "Mordaunt Kramer did something very tremendous for each one of us." I was sitting there fascinated, seeing but not believing. The others had entirely forgotten my presence. "Each one of us loved Mordaunt Kramer. We are four intelligent men, Dr. Schuler. We felt that there was something out of the ordinary in Mordaunt Kramer's death. A hunch is the American expression, I believe. There was no tangible concrete fact to show us that Mordaunt Kramer's death was not a natural one. But we felt that Mordaunt's life did not explain his death — and we felt that his death was an entire contradiction of his life. A man who has built a railway over the Andes does not die by a fall from a window. A man who has won every possible honour in war does not die like a neurotic, feeble-minded fool.

"For seven years now we four have tried to find something which would explain his death. All we had were two letters from him, and the codicil to his will. Yet strangely we could not connect you with his death, for none of us knew much of psychoanalysis. Then Fulton Kramer went to Vienna. He talked to the leading men in your field, Dr. Schuler. He showed them the letter which told of the treatment you had ordered. You never should have allowed Mordaunt to write that letter, Dr. Schuler. It was your one slip."

Von Genthner stopped and Kramer took up the story. "When I showed the men in Vienna that letter they shook their heads in bewilderment," he went on. " 'Schuler must have slipped badly,' they told me. 'Why, he gave your brother the worst possible advice. The treatment in such cases is the very reverse of what Schuler ordered. A patient with a desire for leaping into space must be treated along the lines first used and

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with great success by Jung. He must be kept from high places, kept from temptation, until that desire is rooted out of the subconscious.'

"That," Kramer continued, "gave us the story. We four discussed the matter. We came to the conclusion that you deliberately murdered my brother for that twenty thousand pounds. Why did you need that money and need it so quickly? You were wealthy, but your wealth was tied up in a Swedish match firm. One never thinks of a doctor as being a heavy investor, but *you* were, Dr. Schuler. The firm was crumbling. If its credit could be maintained for a few months the crisis would be passed. That is why you murdered Mordaunt Kramer,"

"You can't prove any of this." Schuler leaped to his feet and his face was pasty. "This is nonsense. You can never prove it. Perhaps I made a mistake in my treatment of your brother. All doctors make mistakes. You can prove nothing."

"You convicted yourself a few moments ago." Hoben was talking now. "Mordaunt's dream of leaping from high places was in essence the same as Von Genthner's imaginary dream of climbing into the ether. And the warning you gave Von Genthner would have saved Mordaunt Kramer."

"You can prove nothing," Gerhardt Schuler repeated more calmly.

"That is correct." Monsieur Henri Beaumont spoke for the first time, but his voice was not the voice of the French Ambassador. It was the calm judicial voice of a prosecuting attorney. "We have consulted the best lawyers in my country and in Germany. It would be quite impossible to convict you legally. Yet you are a murderer, Dr. Schuler. You are a menace to society, and we have decided that you must die as any murderer dies. And it is most appropriate that you die to-night. It was seven years ago to-night that Mordaunt Kramer died."

"We waste time," Hoben broke in. "Von Genthner, give the Doctor his orders."

"You can't . . . you can't murder me in cold blood. My God! you are intelligent, cultured men." His eyes searched frantically from one to another. "You can't . . ."

"We have all seen men die," Von Genthner said, and his voice was edged with contempt. "We were all in the war, Dr. Schuler."

I sat there, and there was moisture on the palms of my hands. I sat there and felt as though a piece of ice was lying against my spine. I sat there and told myself, "This is not real. It can't be. I am not watching four of the world's greatest men execute another man." I told myself that

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and looked round the silent table.

Von Genthner wasn't the cultured, soft-spoken Baron now. He was the German war ace; the cold, merciless man who had downed forty planes. The French Ambassador? Once again he was Colonel Henri Beaumont, leader of one of France's greatest regiments. He was the stern soldier to whom life was a game, the loss of which means death. Hoben? He was the Prussian soldier now. There was no pity on his face — on it was the look of disgust of one who peers at some crawling thing. Fulton Kramer? The man who had fought his way from nowhere to a great industrial position was showing nothing but a mask. His eyes were steady and cold. Now at this moment they weren't four cultured gentlemen. They were a court of summary judgment assembled to pass sentence on one who had broken the law.

Von Genthner reached into his waistcoat pocket. He drew forth a tiny white pill. He reached across the table and dropped it into the glass of champagne which stood in front of Gerhardt Schuler. The tiny white pill danced merrily in the bubbles and then slowly began to disintegrate. Schuler watched the glass as though it hypnotized him. "What is that, Von Genthner? What is that?"

"Just a little pill, Doctor." Von Genthner's voice was as calm as a soft breeze. "Merely ten grains of veronal. That's only a sleeping potion, Doctor, as you know. Ten grains would scarcely hurt a child."

Hoben drew forth a similar pill from his waistcoat pocket. He reached over, too, and dropped it into Schuler's glass. "There's another one, Doctor," he said.

"I have also one for you, Doctor Schuler." Monsieur Beaumont dropped a third pill into the glass.

"And here is mine," Fulton Kramer's soft voice spoke.

All of us watched the pills dissolve. Von Genthner filled his glass with champagne and passed the bottle to Hoben. First he, then Kramer and Beaumont filled their glasses.

"Forty grains . . . forty grains of veronal. . . . Good God! Forty grains of veronal will kill a man." I thought Schuler was going to break down completely.

"Yes," Von Genthner said calmly, "forty grains will kill a man — and a fall from the tenth-story window of the Hotel Imperial will kill a man — and did. You will merely go to sleep, Doctor, but you will not awake. No one of us will have killed you, Doctor. We are unselfish, Doctor Schuler. Each of us wanted to avenge the murder of Mordaunt Kramer. But we are unselfish. Each of us was willing to allow the others to take a part in your execution."

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Schuler's eyes never left that wine glass. Now the pills had been completely dissolved. The bubbles had quieted and the wine looked like any other wine.

Von Genthner rose. The others followed. I found myself on my feet, too.

"Now, Doctor Schuler, will you join us in a toast?" Von Genthner's words cut across the table like knife thrusts into the stunned consciousness of Schuler. Schuler rose almost mechanically.

"If I refuse?" his beautiful voice was but a husky whisper now. He looked round at the grim faces which were peering at him.

"You will not refuse," Von Genthner assured him. "There is no help for you, Doctor. You are facing a firing squad, but a humane firing squad. We are alone, Doctor. The servants have left. There is no help for you."

"You will join us in a toast, Doctor, won't you?" Hoben's voice was as biting as the unexpected blast of an icy wind.

"You see, Doctor Schuler," Monsieur Henri Beaumont said in a matter-of-fact tone, "there is nothing else for you to do."

Fulton Kramer raised his glass. "To my brother," he said simply. The others raised their glasses too, but they kept their eyes on Schuler. Mechanically, almost as if some force over which he had no control was actuating him, Schuler raised his glass until it touched his lips. Then he drank. He drank it in one horrible gulp. Then he reached for the back of his chair and he clung to it with one hand. The others finished and replaced their glasses on the table.

"Forty grains of veronal. . . ." Schuler's face was not pretty to see. "Forty grains," he whispered. "In ten minutes I will be . . ."

"In four minutes, Doctor Schuler," Von Genthner broke in. "In four minutes you will be dead. Veronal works very quickly, Doctor. Even now, I dare say, you can feel a slight constriction in your throat. Your throat is dry, Doctor. You can feel the muscles tightening. . . . Now, Doctor, the veronal has reached your heart. You can feel the muscles of the heart contracting, Doctor. They are gripping the heart with iron bands. You can feel them, Doctor. You can . . ."

Schuler's glass crashed to the table. He sobbed out a choked, "Yes, yes, I can feel it. You had no right to do this."

He raised a shaking hand to his collar and a fleck of foam appeared against the darkness of his beard. "You are murderers, do you hear me? I killed Mordaunt Kramer. Yes, I killed him as you said I did. I killed

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him and I would kill you . . ." His voice was a hysterical scream now. "I killed him . . . killed him . . ."

Suddenly a spasm crossed his face. Then he raised his head and his eyes grew big. They grew bigger and he too seemed to grow in stature. A hand went jerkily to his heart and then — then his head dropped quickly, and he slumped forward grotesquely, and slid to the floor.

Von Genthner crossed the room in three strides. Von Genthner bent over him. "Dead," he said solemnly, "Dead. His heart was very bad, you know. Too bad, gentlemen. He was a great scientist." Von Genthner turned to me. "Call an ambulance, will you? We must have him brought to his home."

"But . . . but the police," I stammered.

"The police? They will find that he died of heart failure."

"An autopsy will show the veronal." I was shaking a bit now.

"Veronal? Come now," Von Genthner actually smiled. "Those four pills we gave Dr. Schuler were only sugar. Just ordinary sugar pills. We did not kill Dr. Schuler. His subconscious mind killed him."

I looked round in bewilderment. Hoben nodded. So did Beaumont, and Kramer said quietly, "Has Von Genthner ever lied to you?"

Von Genthner laid a hand on my arm. "It was a case of self-execution. We used this method at the suggestion of Dr. Schuler himself, that is, at the suggestion of something we found in one of his books. I remember the quotation well, it goes: 'The subconscious mind can be a powerful enemy. A thought can be placed in the conscious mind, and if that thought is powerful enough it will enter and dominate the subconscious. The conscious mind may try to reject that thought as being absurd, but sometimes the subconscious will prove too powerful and it will hold the thought. If the thought is powerful enough it can even control the heart and the other organs of the body. In some cases a thought can enter the subconsciousness and be so terrifying as to cause death.'"

Von Genthner paused. "Let us go into the other room. . . . You see, my friend, we implanted a terrifying thought into the mind of Gerhardt Schuler. It took complete possession of him, and although his conscious mind tried to reject it, it could not. And his heart, not strong at best, succumbed to the suggestion of the subconscious. Now will you phone for an ambulance?"

I reached for the telephone. As I asked for the Berlin hospital I heard Fulton Kramer's voice say quietly, "I shall sleep peacefully to-night for the first time in seven years."

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You've heard the expression "a ballplayer's ballplayer" — or "a writer's writer." Well, here's what might be called "a detective-story reader's detective story" — all about a man who read too many of them, and what came of it. . .

(This story is not meant to point a moral!)

THE MAN WHO READ TOO MANY DETECTIVE STORIES

by HENRY HASSE

I HAD to grin as I watched Hancken getting nowhere faster and faster. He stood there with his big feet wide apart, hands on his hips, glowering down at old man Dollens in the straight-backed mahogany chair. Hancken was itching to put on the screws, but didn't quite dare — yet.

"Now listen," he made an attempt to keep down his temper. "I'm through foolin'! We're haulin' you downtown pretty soon, and we have some boys in the department who can *really* get tough! Better spill it now and save yourself a lot of grief. *Why'd you kill him?*"

This had gone on for the past twenty minutes. Old man Dollens sat there in his own living room like an overstuffed mummy, and every bit as silent. His face was gray, thin and somber. The skin across the bridge of his nose was so tight it seemed about to burst. His eyes were black but expressionless as he looked straight up at Hancken.

In my capacity as police reporter I've come across some queer characters, and I saw that this old man could be more stubborn than Hancken could be tough.

Hancken leaned over and thrust his chin forward. "Come on, spill it! Why'd you kill him? We know it wasn't no accident!"

I'd had enough, even if the old man hadn't. "Why don't you put on another record, Hancken?"

"What?" He whirled on me.

"I said where'd Lieutenant Murphy go."

"Dunno. Library, I think."

I headed in that direction. This Dollens mansion reminded me of a mausoleum; it was just as gloomy, and twice as big. I reached the library doors in time to see Murphy coming out of the huge brown-panelled room.

"And what've you been doing all

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this time?" I asked.

Murphy grunted. "Nothing. Nothing at all except to look for a motive, while you birds were stripping your tonsils out here."

"Motive, eh? Yeah, that's got me stymied. Find it?"

"Sure."

"In there?"

"Yes," Murphy said. "Come in here a minute."

It was daylight, but the library shades were still drawn. The room had a musty odor. Murphy turned on the overhead lights. I saw a big Morris chair with a faded lounging robe thrown across the arm of it, and a pair of slippers on the floor. Next to the slippers was an open book with some of the pages crumpled. I walked over and looked at the title. It was MURDER HATH CHARMS.

"But what about the motive?"

Murphy took me over to the shelves lining two walls of the room. "Take a look."

I did, but I couldn't see what Murphy was driving at.

"The titles," he said. "Look."

I read a few of the titles. Then it began to dawn on me.

"What a collection," Murphy said, waving a hand. "They're all here. Everything from Anthony Abbot to Israel Zangwill — from Uncle Abner to Prince Zaleski. This is the largest collection of mystery fiction I've ever seen! Dorothy L. Sayers, J. S. Fletcher, Agatha Christie, Ellery Queen, Erle Stanley Gardner, Rex Stout, John Dickson Carr, Arthur Morrison — all of 'em, old and new. Dollens must have collected detective fiction all his life!"

"Wonder if he's read them all?"

"Probably has, over a period of years. And look — he hasn't neglected the detective magazines either. The best and the worst of them."

These were stacked in all the corners — tattered, tottering piles of them reaching higher than my head.

"But here," Murphy went on, indicating a set of shelves apart from the others, at the far end of the room, "is the prize lot of all. These are something special — extra-special."

In this section were more novels, short-story collections, mystery anthologies and scores of the detective magazines, all jammed together with no semblance of order or distinction.

"I don't get it," I said. "This stuff is special? Why?"

"Because they tell us the motive for this murder."

"I still don't —"

"Never mind. You will. Come on, let's see if we can open up Dollens."

We reached the living room just as Doc Prother came down the stairs. Crossing the room, his eyes

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went up to the wide, wet patch on the ceiling. "I oughta had a rowboat up there," he remarked whimsically. "Who's the corpse — the son?"

"Nephew," Murphy said.

"Uh-huh. Well, looks like you've got something here. Death by drowning, all right. Face down in the tub. Bad bruise on the forehead, caused when he fell. Might look like an accident, the kind that happens in bathrooms every day."

Murphy gestured impatiently. "All right, all right. It looks like an accident — except what?"

"Except there's another bruise on the back of his head, hardly noticeable. Might have been done by something heavy wrapped in a towel, or a big cake of soap swung in the toe of a sock; something that stuns, but doesn't leave much of a mark."

Murphy nodded. "I noticed it, but I wanted to be sure."

"Well, that's all. The party's yours now." With barely a glance at old man Dollens sitting there, the Doc gathered up his coat and left.

Hancken moved from behind Dollen's chair. "I can't get another peep out of him, Murph. But I ain't started yet. Just let me —"

"No. That's all right." Murphy's voice was soft, expressionless, the voice that always told me he was about to go to work in his own way. "Perhaps Mr. Dollens doesn't feel like talking. After all, he's already told us what happened. He dozed off in the library. He slept there all night. He was awakened this morning by the sound of running water. He went upstairs to find his nephew drowned in the tub."

I'd watched Murphy work before, and I knew he had something up his sleeve. I couldn't guess what, but I knew he was working it on Dollens right now.

"But," he went on, "maybe there's another angle. We've got to exhaust the possibilities, like — uh — like they do in mystery stories. You fellows never knew it, but I'm quite a detective story addict. Yes, I know, a cop oughta know better. But I read 'em, and sometimes they give me funny ideas. Right now I have a funny idea about this case."

Dollens's expression didn't change, as he shifted his head a little to look at Murphy. Hancken was puzzled. He'd never seen Murphy work before. I smiled as I compared Murphy's method to Hancken's.

"Now, see if you don't think it might have happened this way. Dollens was in the library last night, like he said. But he was waiting for his nephew to come home. He'd already decided to

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murder him. The nephew came in, went upstairs and got his bath ready. Dollens crept up the stairs and into the bathroom, where he struck his nephew down in the tub and let him drown there. Then he purposely overflowed the tub, and called us this morning to report the 'accident.' Sound plausible, Hancken?"

"Huh?" Hancken stammered. "Oh, yeah — sure, that sounds all right."

"And yet," Murphy said, "it's not very plausible at all."

"It ain't?"

"No. Not until we know *why* he did it. Murder without motive doesn't make sense. Any idea why he did it?

Hancken shoved his cap back and scratched his head. "No, I can't figure it. Now if it had been the *other* way around — But what's the old man got to gain?"

Murphy half turned away and lit a cigarette. By that gesture I knew something was coming. When he spoke again it was directly at the old man, as if he had just that moment noticed him sitting there.

"By the way, Mr. Dollens, I'd like to compliment you on your collection of mystery fiction."

The old man's eyes never flickered.

"I was looking it over a little while ago. Best I've ever seen. Must be a fascinating hobby, and I suppose you've read all of 'em."

Dollens raised his head a little, and a sort of gleam flickered in his eyes but I didn't know what it meant. I merely listened intently as Murphy went on.

"Mr. Dollens, as an avid mystery reader you know the two most important elements of a murder. The *method* and the *motive*. And like I was telling Hancken, here, one without the other doesn't mean much.

"Take this case. I was at a loss for a motive. But I found it. I found it, Dollens, in your library — on the special shelves at the far end of the room. In your years of reading murder mysteries you came across a certain recurrent type of story. Yes, I see you know the one I mean. Lately this must have begun to bother you, gnaw at you, until you just had to do something about it. Sure, I knew this particular story-plot was common, but I didn't realize *how* common until you segregated scores of them and pencil-checked them!"

Murphy wasn't leisurely now, and his voice was no longer soft. "*That* was your error, Dollens! A clumsy error, but I suppose you only checked those stories for your own reference, didn't think the police would go prying into your collection — they usually turn up their noses

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at that kind of stuff. Sure, Dollens — *I know why you murdered your nephew!*"

Dollens's face was dead white, and his knuckles were tight as he gripped the arms of the chair.

Murphy's next words were so explosive that I jumped. "Shall I tell you what happened? You came across that type of story too often! They preyed on your mind! You brooded! The brooding became suspicion, the suspicion almost certainty, until you took what you thought was the only way out! And that was —"

There was a sudden animal snarl in the old man's throat. With amazing agility he was on his feet, leaping forward with claw-like hands reaching out for Murphy's face. Hancken must have been watching him pretty closely. Hancken's fist came around, and the old man went down in a heap. Hancken jerked him up by the collar, and Dollens's snarl turned into a series of sobs.

"Sure, I did it! I killed him! But I had to, before it was too late . . . it was him or me, I tell you . . . I wasn't going to sit by, waiting!" The babbling confession became incoherent, and a bit of froth appeared on the old man's lips. Hancken led him away.

Murphy wiped his forehead and said, "Whew! Good thing he cracked. I was counting on that."

"But I still don't get it," I said to Murphy as we rode back uptown. "This motive business, I mean. Seems like it should've been the other way around. Now if the nephew had murdered *him*, to get the property or something — that's usually the way it is in stories."

"Exactly. The old man had literally dozens of stories like that pencil-checked. Every one of those stories was about the grandson murdering his grandfather to get the old miser's money, or the heir murdering the guardian, or the impatient nephew murdering the rich old uncle so he'll come into the inheritance. Ever read any of those?"

"Sounds familiar."

"Sure it does. Any murder-mystery fan knows the type. I'll bet I've read that old theme a hundred times, in assorted versions. Apparently old Dollens came across it so often he went loony over it, got the idea that *his* nephew was planning . . . Well, you know the rest. *The uncle merely reversed the procedure!*"

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Do you remember the fairy tale about the king who had three daughters — and each daughter was more beautiful than the other? No? Well, don't be alarmed — this isn't that story. But you'll discover that "The Doctor and the Lunatic" does have points of similarity.

For one thing, it is not stretching the imagination too far to call a detective story a sort of modern fairy tale. For another, Richard Connell's story is about a murderer who committed three crimes — and each crime was more "beautiful" than the other.

More "beautiful" and more bizarre. . . .

It is a privilege to reprint another classic tale by the author of "The Most Dangerous Game," one of the finest short stories of murder written in the last two decades.

THE DOCTOR AND THE LUNATIC

by RICHARD CONNELL

EARLY that sunny, soundless June morning, old Matthew Kelton came out of his salt-box house to potter for a time in his rose garden while his cook was crisping the breakfast bacon. Below in the peaceful valley he could see the little white village of Mallow drowsing beside its silver-green strip of river, and he could see looming dimly in the distance the beginnings of the Berkshires; but it was the immediate landscape that interested Matthew Kelton just then, his roses, and particularly one rose. For forty years raising roses had been his hobby, and he had won many blue ribbons; but he had never grown, nor, indeed, ever seen a more magnificent specimen than this perfect and beautiful flower which had come to grace his garden.

"Nature," he told his wife, "has performed a miracle. I worked many years to produce a rose like this but the best I grew fell short of my dreams. Then this one happened — a new variety — happened as mysteriously as the birth of a genius. This is a — well, I should call it a Shakespeare among roses."

He hurried across his garden toward this paragon which was isolated from the common blooms by a wire fence. Behind his glasses his blue eyes beamed with excited pride. Then he stopped abruptly and gave a short, shocked cry. His rose was gone.

It was not gone entirely, though. It had been ripped up by the roots, its stem had been broken into a dozen pieces, and the flower itself had been torn to shreds. The frag-

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ments lay inside and all around the crushed wire cage, and they had been trampled and ground into the dirt.

"Martha!" cried Kelton, and there was a sob in his voice. "Martha, come here."

His wife hurried from the house. He could not say anything. He could only point with a trembling finger.

"Oh, Matthew, how awful!" exclaimed his wife. "I'm so sorry. How did it happen?"

"I don't know," said Kelton, and his normally mild face was grim, "but, by the Lord Harry, I'm going to find out."

"Some animal —" she began.

"An animal, yes," he cut in. "An animal, beyond a doubt. An animal that wore boots! Look!"

He waved his hand at the ground around the rose. She saw the imprints, blurred but unmistakable, of soles and heels.

"But who could do so wanton and savage a thing?" said Mrs. Kelton.

"Only a wanton savage," Kelton said.

"An enemy?"

"I can think of no one who hates me," said Matthew Kelton.

She put her arm around his slender shoulders.

"No one could hate you, Matt," she said. "Perhaps this was done by some heedless small boys."

"A man did this, a big man. Look at the size of those footprints," said Kelton.

"Perhaps some passing motorist helped himself to some of our flowers," said Mrs. Kelton. "There was a full moon last night, you know, and it wouldn't have been difficult."

"They could not see this flower from the road," said Kelton, "and there are dozens of bushes much handier. To get to this one rose he had to pass a thousand others. Besides, cars almost never come up this dead-end road at night and when they do I always hear them. I'm a light sleeper; but I heard nothing. No, dear, this was done deliberately in cold fury, and it worries me, worries me terribly."

"I know, Matt," said Martha Kelton, gently. "You loved that rose. But wait! You'll grow another just as perfect."

"Perhaps," said Kelton. "I hardly dare hope to. But it's not the rose I'm bothered about; it's the mind that directed the hands that shattered that rose. It frightens me, Martha —"

"Why?"

"It hardly bears thinking about," said Kelton. "Let's go into the house. I need my coffee this morning."

He had finished his breakfast, and

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lit his pipe and was distracting himself with the cryptogram in the morning newspaper, when a huge motor-car came panting up the hill and a huge and panting man in riding clothes got out of it and came lumbering up the path to Kelton's vine-grown porch.

"Good-morning, Squire," Kelton greeted the giant.

"Good morning nothing," growled Squire Abernathy. "A bad morning for me. Kelton, I swear if I get my hands on him, I'll show him what real strangling is."

His two big, calloused hands closed on an imaginary throat.

"What's happened?" demanded Kelton, with quick concern.

The Squire's fat face was mottled and creased with rage.

"Tex is dead," he said.

"Tex? I'm distressed to hear that," said Kelton.

"Murdered!" said the Squire. "Hanged by the neck like a common felon."

"Who did it?"

"I don't know — yet."

"Some rival collie breeder, perhaps?" suggested Kelton.

"No," stated Abernathy, emphatically. "No dog-lover would harm so splendid an animal as Defender Tex. Poor Tex —" Abernathy's deep voice broke — "He was the handsomest creature I ever saw, as intelligent as many men and better behaved than most, a real gentleman, and I found him this morning hanging high in that sycamore near his kennel, cold and stiff. A fiend's work that, Kelton!"

"Any clues?"

"None; but I'm convinced the man was no stranger around here."

"Why do you think that?"

"Knew my place well. Dodged the burglar alarms. Moreover, Tex must have known him, or he never could have come near Tex. It's a local man, all right. Oh, yes, Kelton, I came here to ask you to help me find him."

"I'll help," said Matthew Kelton. "Gladly. Now, Squire, you know this section well —"

"Born here. Lived here all my life," said the Squire. "Know every man, woman and child. Oh, yes."

"Can you think of anybody who might conceivably do such a foul deed?" queried Kelton.

"I've squeezed my brain till it's black and blue," said Abernathy, "and I can't think of a soul. Of course, there's that fellow —"

He paused, frowning blackly.

"Go on," urged Kelton.

"Well, I don't feel justified in accusing him of a dirty trick like this," said the Squire, "but that rich crank, General Bannerman, whose place is next to mine, hates

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me. Claims my dogs killed his pheasants. He's a liar, and so I told him. We threw some bitter words back and forth. He's a queer one, Kelton — and a possibility."

"The General is not overfond of me, either," observed Kelton. "We crossed swords at a town meeting."

"Y'know, Kelton," said the Squire, "I think we may hear from this rascal again."

"We already have," said Kelton. "Come with me, please."

He led Abernathy across the garden and showed him the wreck of the rose. Abernathy whistled; then he swore in no uncertain terms.

"His work!" he said. "I'll bet on that. Cursed tough on you, Kelton. That rose was as wonderful, in its way, as my Tex was in his. Well, what's next? They say things go in threes, you know."

"I'm not superstitious," said Matthew Kelton, with a half smile.

Toward them through the roses came his wife.

"Matt," she said, "I just took a telephone message from General Bannerman. He's coming to see you right away, Matt."

"Did he say why, Martha?"

"Yes," she told him. "It seems that last night somebody broke into his house. Nothing was stolen, but you know that lovely Raphael Madonna he has —"

Kelton nodded.

"Well," she went on, "it was slashed to ribbons."

The two men stared at each other.

Soon General Bannerman's long English car shot up the hill. The General was an elderly man, very tall, very erect, very stiff. He walked straight up to Squire Abernathy.

"Heard about your dog, Abernathy," he said, gruffly. "Noble animal. Rotten shame. Sorry."

"Thanks, General," returned the Squire. "And I'm sorry about your picture."

They stood eyeing each other awkwardly.

"Same scoundrel did both jobs, I think," said General Bannerman. "It could hardly be a coincidence."

"That's my idea," said Abernathy. "And Kelton is in this, too. Last night his prize rose was ruined."

"Really?" said the General. "That's too bad, Kelton."

He cleared his throat, and there was a tinge of embarrassment in his voice, as he said:

"Look here, gentlemen, we've had our tiffs; but I think we should call a truce in our little war and combine forces against the common enemy. What do you say?"

"My hand on that," boomed the Squire.

"And mine," said Kelton.

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"I came to see you, Kelton," said Bannerman, "because I thought you might be willing to help me solve this mystery."

"It's a case for the police, you know," said Matthew Kelton.

"Police be blowed!" ejaculated the General. "Those two scarecrows we call constables couldn't find a bull in a bathroom, and that lazy, drunken slob of a political sheriff couldn't arrest himself. I have notified the police, but we can expect scant help from that quarter. Gentlemen, this is our show. Any suggestions?"

"The obvious one," said Abernathy. "The man's mad."

"Must be," agreed Bannerman. "I see no motive behind such insensate vandalism; and only a lunatic acts without motive."

"On the contrary," said Matthew Kelton, "no man has stronger reasons than the man who has lost his reason. He is driven to do strange and dreadful deeds by an imperious, pitiless logic. You see, he knows he is right though all the world may say he is wrong."

"What reason had that scoundrel for destroying our property?" asked General Bannerman. "Spite?"

"Possibly," said Kelton. "That is, if we three have, to use your phrase, a common enemy."

"Looks like it," said Abernathy.

Matthew Kelton shook his white head.

"I cannot believe in this common enemy," he said. "Why should we have a common enemy when we have so little in common? Our paths have crossed but seldom in the present, and never, I think, in the past. You, General, have spent most of your life abroad, haven't you?"

"Quite so."

"And you, Squire, have always lived here in Mallow."

"That's right."

"And I," said Kelton, "have spent a rather quiet life in my laboratory in New York City and my rose garden at Oyster Bay, until I moved here three years ago. I must confess I can see no direct links between the soldier, the farmer and the chemist."

"Can't, myself," said the General.

"Nor can I," said the Squire.

"The common denominator, then," averred Kelton, "must be in this man's mind."

"A warped and twisted mind, remember," said Bannerman.

"Then we must look for a warped and twisted motive," said Kelton. "And that takes us into the shadowy realms of morbid psychology. I therefore think we should ask Dr. Clement Canfield to help us."

"Dr. Canfield?" said the General. "Oh, yes, that's the fellow who bought the old Griggs place on

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Battle Hill. Retired from active practice, hasn't he?"

"Yes," said Kelton, "but in his time he was the foremost alienist and brain surgeon on the Pacific Coast. His operations were medical classics."

"Can we get him?" said Abernathy.

"I'm sure we can," said Kelton. "I've always found him most obliging. He takes a great interest in everything affecting the community."

"A dashed valuable ally for us," said the General. "Expert advice. Heaven knows we need it. Will you phone him, Kelton, and ask him to come over?"

"Immediately," said Matthew Kelton.

The eminent surgeon and psychiatrist joined them in twenty minutes. He was a well built man in the forties, whose wise, professional face bore a full beard. Kelton tersely told him what had happened.

"You came to the right shop, gentlemen," said Dr. Canfield. "My field, decidedly. Fact is, I had a case very like this one out West. Young banker, he was, a fine chap, liked and respected by everybody. He seemed as sane as any of us sitting here. He did his work efficiently, and cut quite a figure in society; but, periodically, his mind jumped the tracks, and then —"

The three listeners leaned toward him.

"And then," pursued Dr. Canfield, "he became as dangerous as a cobra."

"In what way?" asked Kelton.

"He destroyed things," replied Dr. Canfield.

"What things?"

"It began," said the doctor, "in a relatively trivial way. A statue of Venus in the sunken garden of an estate was found one morning thrown down and mutilated with a chisel. Hoodlums, we all thought. Then a rock was hurled through the stained glass window of a church, a window considered one of the finest in the country. Soon after that an attempt was made to burn down the private library of a wealthy man which contained many priceless old books and *objets d'art.* I sensed a connection between the crimes; but neither I, nor anybody, suspected that they were done by Gabriel Fenwick —"

"What happened next?" asked Kelton.

"Important for us to know," put in Bannerman. "Marked similarity between the two cases. Same pattern. Our man may do the same thing. . . . What did Fenwick do?"

"He did not stop at destroying — *things*," said the doctor, gravely.

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"Good Lord," cried Abernathy, "do you mean he turned killer?"

"Yes," said Dr. Canfield. "There was a girl, an unusually beautiful girl — and, well, the details aren't nice. Gabriel Fenwick was caught red-handed, literally red-handed, beside her battered body."

"What did they do to him?" asked Bannerman.

"On my testimony he was adjudged insane," Dr. Canfield told them. "He was put away in a place where he can do no more harm."

"He may have escaped," said Abernathy.

"I'm positive he has not," said Dr. Canfield.

"Positive?"

"Absolutely," Dr. Canfield said, "I've kept in close touch with the case. I had more than a scientific interest in it. You see, poor Fenwick was my oldest and best friend."

"A flower, a dog, a picture," mused Matthew Kelton, "and next? Gentlemen, we *must* find that man."

"And soon," said Bannerman. "Doctor, how can we tell him when we see him?"

"You can't," said Dr. Canfield. "Unfortunately our man will bear no outward and visible signs of his sinister nature. Nor will his conduct or conversation betray him. I'm considered an expert in such matters, and I knew Gabriel Fenwick intimately, but I never suspected his condition, nor would I have believed he was guilty had he not been caught in the act. So, our quarry may be — anybody. He may be you — or you — or you —"

His finger stabbed at the three men in turn.

"We must warn everybody in the county to be on their guard," Squire Abernathy declared.

"Against whom? Against what?" snapped Bannerman. "We don't know the man. We don't know how or where or when he'll strike next. Why throw the whole countryside into a panic, and make the wretch wary?"

"I agree with Abernathy," Kelton said. "We should issue a warning. It's a forlorn hope, I grant you; but in this desperate emergency we must grasp at every straw."

"Then," said the Squire, "I'll get Jennings of the Mallow *Sentinel* to plaster this affair all over his front page tomorrow."

General Bannerman considered a moment.

"Very well," he said, "We need all the weapons we can get. How about offering a reward?"

"Sound idea," approved Kelton.

"Make it ten thousand dollars," said the General. "I'll underwrite that."

"I'll subscribe my share," said the

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Squire.

"And so will I," said Kelton.

"Let's split it four ways," said Dr. Canfield. "I want to be in this, too."

"Done!" said Abernathy. "If anybody has a scrap of evidence or the shred of a clue, money will make them talk. We'll cover the county with reward broadsides."

"We did all that out West," said Dr. Canfield, somberly. "It didn't stop Fenwick."

Kelton paced the porch.

"If we could only anticipate what he may do," he said.

"How can we?" General Bannerman spoke testily. "We're sane, presumably. We know right from wrong. Understand cause and effect. How can a man of sense predict what a man without sense will do?"

"But I tell you our man has a purpose, a motive," asserted Kelton, doggedly. "A pattern, you yourself said, General. For look! He has not run amuck and broken blindly whatever came first to his hand. No, each time he sought out and destroyed one single, perfect, beautiful thing. He must have a reason, perverted if you will, but a reason nonetheless."

Mrs. Kelton came out of the house.

"Lunch is ready," she announced. "Perhaps you gentlemen will stay ——"

"I'm sorry, but I've an engagement," said the General.

"Thanks," said the Squire, "but I must hustle right down to the village and see about getting out those reward posters."

"Will you stay, Dr. Canfield?" asked Kelton.

"Delighted to lunch with you," said the doctor.

General Bannerman and Squire Abernathy left, after arranging to have another conference at the General's home that evening.

"We call it lunch," said Mrs. Kelton to the doctor, "but it's really dinner, I guess. We're still old-fashioned enough, Matt and I, to take our chief meal in the middle of the day."

"Then I'm in luck," laughed Dr. Canfield. "I'm blessed with an old-fashioned appetite."

"We're having a roast chicken," said Mrs. Kelton, as they sat down at the dining-room table. "Raised on our own place."

"Excellent," said Dr. Canfield.

"Perhaps you wouldn't mind carving, Doctor," said Matthew Kelton. "I've a touch of neuritis, in my arms, and the art of carving (for it is an art) is a closed book to Mrs. Kelton."

"I'll do my best," promised Dr. Canfield, picking up the carving knife. "Light or dark, Mrs. Kelton?"

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"A little of each, if you please, Doctor."

Dr. Canfield eyed the bird meditatively, and then began slowly to carve.

"Oh, I am sorry," he exclaimed. "Must have struck a bone."

The carving knife had slipped from his hand and fallen to the floor. He bent and retrieved it.

"That's quite all right, Doctor," said Mrs. Kelton. "You should see the hash I make of the carving job."

Dr. Canfield attacked the chicken again, and managed to get off several thick pieces.

"I am making rather a botch of it," he said cheerfully. He twisted loose a leg. "Well, this is one case where the end justified the means."

They discussed roses for a time, and then Kelton said:

"Tell me, Doctor, in confidence, is it possible that either Bannerman or Abernathy could be the man we're after?"

"Possible, oh, yes," said Canfield.

"Those footprints were made by a big man," remarked Kelton. "The Squire and the General are both big men. And both have a reputation for eccentricity. Still they seem so solid, so sensible —"

"They're good fellows. I like them both," said Dr. Canfield. "But, Kelton, my experience has taught me that the surface of a man means nothing."

"Do you suspect either of them?" inquired Kelton.

"I suspect everybody," said the doctor, soberly.

"Even me?" smiled Mrs. Kelton.

"I said 'everybody'," replied Dr. Canfield.

"But," said Kelton, as he helped the doctor to home-made elderberry wine, "it's hard for me to imagine Abernathy killing a valuable dog he was extremely fond of, or Bannerman damaging a favorite picture."

"It was equally hard to imagine Gabriel Fenwick harming the girl to whom he was engaged," said Dr. Canfield, drily.

They talked a while after lunch, about the mental condition of the man who had shattered the rose, and Kelton got lost in a maze of technicalities. Then Dr. Canfield departed, and Matthew Kelton sat on his porch and smoked many thoughtful pipes. It was late in the afternoon when a gangling figure in overalls approached the porch and broke in on Kelton's speculations. He recognized his visitor as Charley Sessions, the local milkman.

"Well, Charley," said Kelton, "what can I do for you?"

"I seen them notices," said Charley. "About the ten thousand dollars, I mean —"

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"Yes?" said Kelton. "You know something?"

"'Taint much, I guess," said Charley.

"Tell me, anyhow," directed Kelton.

"Well, Mr. Kelton," said Charley in his high drawl, "I was out deliverin' on my milk route, like as always, this mornin' and as I was a-comin' down Red Coat Lane from the old Griggs place I seen a man a-walkin' up the lane. Thinks I, 'You're out mighty early. Now who can you be?' — but I never did find out because when he seen me he dove all of suddent into the bushes and scuttled away like a rabbit. Thinks I — 'That's a funny thing for a fella to do' so I says to myself —"

"You did not recognize him then," interrupted Kelton.

"No, sir. It was before sun-up and it's sort of dark and spooky in that lane anyhow."

"Can you describe him?"

Charley scratched his head.

"Well, he was a man — not big and yet not little — but bigger than he was little — I think — and I think he had on dark clothes like a undertaker wears, but I couldn't swear to that — and I think his face was black — like a fella in a minstrel show —"

"Burnt cork," muttered Kelton. "An old war-time trick. A white face shows in the moonlight —"

"Huh?" said Charley.

"Never mind."

"Can I have the ten thousand dollars now?" asked Charley.

Kelton chuckled.

"Not yet awhile," he said. "If your information leads to anything, you'll get a fair share of the reward, I guarantee that."

"Thank you, Mr. Kelton," said Charley, and turned to go. Near the gate he stopped, and said —

"Somethin' else I just thought of."

"What?" asked Kelton.

"'Taint none of my business, and mebbe it has nothin' to do with nothin', but I got an idee that Dr. Canfield ain't the only one who lives up there in the old Griggs place."

"Nonsense, Charley," said Kelton. "Dr. Canfield lives all alone. I know. I've visited him often."

"Well, mebbe," said Charley. "But yesterday mornin' I hear two voices in that house, a high one and a low one —"

"What were they saying?"

"I couldn't make out," said Charley. "But if there wasn't two men there, I'm a Chinaman; and, Mr. Kelton, that ain't the first time I've heard those two voices. No, sir."

"Interesting," commented Kelton. "Charley, don't tell anybody else what you've just told me."

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Matthew Kelton jumped into his car and drove swiftly along the winding roads till he came to Red Coat Lane. He turned into it, and mounting Battle Hill, reached the old Griggs place with its sprawling mansion, relic of the days when American architecture reached its lowest ebb, congeries of cupolas, bulging bay-windows, unwarranted verandas hideous with jig-saw fretwork. This was the house Dr. Canfield had bought when he moved to Mallow some fifteen months before. It was a sagging, unkempt shell of a house when he took it, but a corps of workmen, brought from Albany to the disgust of the local contractors, had made it ship-shape and habitable, without, however, adding anything to the charm of its exterior.

Kelton rang the bell and Dr. Canfield came to the door.

"Glad to see you, Kelton," he said, cordially. "You have news. I can tell that. Well, sit down and tell me."

"I'll come straight to the point," said Matthew Kelton. "Doctor Canfield, have you another person living in this house?"

Dr. Canfield looked back steadily at Kelton.

"You've guessed my secret," he said, quietly. "I supposed that sooner or later it was bound to come out. I might as well tell you the story now."

"I think you don't have to tell me who your prisoner is," said Kelton.

"No, I don't," said Dr. Canfield. "And let me tell you, Kelton, I'm not ashamed of what I've done. I could not bear to see poor Fenwick shut away in some horrible institution, when I could take care of him. I've broken no law. The courts committed him to my care. I'm responsible for him, legally, and morally, too —"

"Morally? What do you mean?" Kelton asked.

"I was driving the car when Fenwick was cracked up," said the doctor. "I'd had a few drinks. If I'd been stone sober, I might have averted the accident. I'm only trying to make what poor amends I can —"

"Let me ask you another blunt question, Doctor," said Kelton.

"Go ahead. I've nothing to conceal."

"Was Gabriel Fenwick out last night?"

"I give you my word, Kelton, he did not leave this house last night — or at any time since he came here," said Dr. Canfield.

"He might have slipped out without your knowledge," said Kelton.

"Not possible," said Dr. Canfield.

"I must be sure of that," said Kelton.

"Very well," said the doctor. "Let

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your own eyes convince you. Wait here, please. I'll go up and tell Fenwick you want to see him. An unexpected visitor might bring on one of his attacks."

Kelton waited in the living-room among the stolid and unshapely furniture. He heard the doctor's tread on the stairs, and the clang of a steel door. Presently Dr. Canfield called down.

"You can come up now, Kelton."

Dr. Canfield met him at the head of the stairs.

"The poor chap lives in here," he said indicating a door. "I had a large room made escape-proof. Steel walls, barred windows, and look at that door —"

Kelton examined the door.

"Why, it's like the door of a bank vault," he said.

"That is precisely what it is," said Dr. Canfield. "It can only be opened from the outside by an intricate combination; and I am the only man alive who knows that combination."

"But the window —" began Kelton.

"You'll see," said Dr. Canfield, and started to manipulate the dials on the massive, metal door. In two minutes it swung open. Kelton stepped into a spacious room, plainly but comfortably furnished with leather easy chairs, a refectory table, and a four-poster bed. On the bed he saw a man, asleep. The face of the sleeping man was an unusually handsome and sensitive face in spite of its pallor and emaciation.

"May I wake him?" whispered Kelton.

"No use trying," said Dr. Canfield. "I found him like this — in one of his stupors. They're characteristic of his malady, you know. He'll sleep like this for seven or eight hours, and nothing can rouse him. So examine the room if you want to. Satisfy yourself that Fenwick could not have committed last night's crimes."

Carefully and without haste, Matthew Kelton made a thorough examination of the room. He tapped walls, floors, ceiling and felt the steel beneath his knuckles. He tested every heavy bar at every window. They were firm and showed no marks as they must have had they been tampered with.

"Well, Doctor," he said, finally, "I don't see how a man could get out of this room."

"Then," said Dr. Canfield, as he closed the steel door after them and reset the combination, "we must look elsewhere for our criminal."

"Yes," conceded Kelton, "we must look elsewhere."

Dr. Canfield escorted him to his car.

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"Be sure to phone me if anything breaks," said the doctor. "If I'm needed, ring me up no matter what the hour is."

"Yes, yes, of course," said Kelton, absently. "Good-bye."

Thrice, though he drove home at a snail's pace, Kelton nearly went off the road; for his mind's eye was focused on a whirling kaleidoscope of conflicting facts, and he was as bewildered by what he saw as if he were mentally color-blind. Fenwick could not get out. But he must have done so. And if he got out once, he could get out again.

At his evening meal he was preoccupied.

"Now, Matt dear, eat your ham," his wife adjured him. "It's already sliced. No carving to do. I'm afraid I wasn't very polite to Dr. Canfield, laughing at the way he carved that chicken."

"Eh? What?" said Kelton. "Oh, yes. He did rather bungle it, didn't he?"

He rose suddenly from the table.

"Where are you going, Matt?" asked his wife.

"I must see Bannerman and Abernathy," said Kelton. "At once."

An hour later, just as the moon was rising, three men stood in a small copse by the side of the turnpike.

"Wild goose chase," growled Bannerman.

"Take it easy, General," said Abernathy, in a low voice.

"I told you," said Kelton in barely audible tones, "that we must keep our mouths tight shut and our eyes wide open."

They waited there in silence, their eyes trained on the spot where the lane joined the main road. Long hours passed, and the moon rose higher. Then Abernathy's hand gripped Kelton's arm, and he said, close to Kelton's ear —

"Ssssh! Someone is coming down Red Coat Lane."

A man came down the lane, walking fast, and started down the turnpike. He was a black blot on the moon-lit road. They had seen his cap, his clothes, his face; all were black. Cautiously, at a distance, the three watchers followed him.

For more than a mile they were able to keep the man in black in sight; then, rounding a sharp bend, they lost him.

"He's left the road," said Bannerman.

"Quick, Squire, tell me," said Kelton, tensely. "Who lives around here?"

"Colonial house on right, Judge Harkness. Next place, two brothers named Leslie. Beyond that is my farm," said Abernathy. "And back

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there in the woods is a bungalow —"

"Whose?"

"Actress from New York has it for the Summer — named Lily Price —"

"Come," commanded Kelton. They followed him along the ragged woodroad that led to the bungalow. As they came toward it they heard a scream that was pinched off short. Kelton bounded into the bungalow, with the other men at his heels. By the brightness of the moon they saw the man in black bending over a figure in white. His hands gripped the woman's throat. Seeing them he sprang up, snarling, and hurled himself at them. Abernathy's big fist shot out, landed flush on the man's chin, and he crumpled to the floor. Kelton switched on the lights.

"Take the lady into the bedroom, General," he said. "She's fainted, but, thank heaven, she's not seriously hurt."

"Right," said Bannerman, and then, as he picked up the girl, "Jove, she's a beauty!"

"You brought rope, Squire," said Kelton.

"Yes."

"Then tie up that man before he comes to."

Abernathy bound the man in black hand and foot.

"It's Fenwick, of course," he said.

"Yes," said Kelton, "It's Gabriel Fenwick."

"How did he get out?" asked Abernathy.

"He didn't," said Kelton. "He was never in. Look closer, Squire."

Abernathy bent over the unconscious man.

"But — Kelton," he cried, "this is Dr. Canfield!"

"No," said Matthew Kelton, "the real Dr. Canfield is locked up in that old house on Battle Hill, as sane as he ever was. We'll crash through those steel walls and set him free as soon as he comes out of his drugged sleep."

"You see," explained Kelton, while they were waiting for the police, "the story we know about Fenwick and Canfield was accurate — up to a certain point. Canfield did bring Fenwick to this out-of-the-way place to take care of him; but Fenwick with the craftiness of his kind, managed, somehow, to reverse the roles, and the patient became the physician, the captor became the captive . . ."

"But what first gave you the idea that the man we knew as Canfield was not the doctor?" asked General Bannerman.

"Just a little mistake he made at lunch," said Matthew Kelton. "Did you ever see a surgeon who couldn't carve?"

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A brilliant tour de force by the gifted author of THE CELESTIAL OMNIBUS *and* A PASSAGE TO INDIA. *Further comment just before the end . . . but play fair — read the story first!*

MR. AND MRS. ABBEY'S DIFFICULTIES

by E. M. FORSTER

THE death of Mrs. Rawlings, followed four years afterwards by that of Mrs. Jennings, her respectable parent, involved Mr. and Mrs. Abbey in appreciable difficulties finally. They did not at first realize the possible consequences of becoming guardian to the four children — John, George, Tom, and Fanny — the offspring of Mrs. Rawlings by a previous union; indeed Mr. Abbey acted with unusual precipitancy, and, without troubling Mr. Sandall, his co-executor under Mrs. Jennings' will, undertook sole charge even in the grandmother's lifetime. The sum of £8,000 — and £8,000 was a substantial sum a hundred and thirty-odd years ago — passed into his control, and he proceeded to administer it for the benefit of the young people as only a business man can.

The connection of the two deceased ladies had been with the livery trade. They had kept the stables attached to the Swan and Hoop, Finsbury Pavement, and the first husband of Mrs. Rawlings had actually been killed by falling off one of his own horses on a dark night not far from Southgate. Mr. Abbey's own position was more secure. A broker in tea, and in coffee also, although scarcely in coffee to an equal extent, he had added to his office in Pancras Lane a residence at Walthamstow, and to the latter a conservatory, and to everything that he undertook the conviction of some ultimate issue. It was at Walthamstow that he made provision for the child Fanny, who was aged but seven years only when she came under his charge. He arranged that she should live with Mrs. and Miss Abbey, she should attend a young ladies' school where she might acquire such education as her sex necessitated. The education of her brother John was already complete, for he had attained his sixteenth year, and Mr. Abbey

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was prompt to remove him from his studies and to apprentice him to a surgeon. George (aged thirteen) and Tom (eleven) were received as clerks into his own office. Thus suitable provision for all concerned was rapidly and adequately made.

Unfortunately the children were restless — a defect inherited from their father, who had been of rustic origin. John would not stick to his gallipots, nor George and Tom to their stools; and Fanny wished to learn the flageolet. They were always asking for money to satisfy their whims, and since Mr. Abbey had in view their ultimate good alone and had reinvested the £8,000 to that end, he negatived all such demands. What they wasted on letter-paper alone was deplorable, for, as the three boys grew up, they were in constant correspondence with one another and with their sister. Mr. and Mrs. Abbey valued a united family highly, none higher; but saw no advantage in Tom communicating with George that it was raining in Devonshire, or in John informing Fanny that he had counted the buns and tarts in a pastry-cook's window, and "was just beginning with the jellies." Mrs. Abbey, in particular, felt that family affection was used as a cloak for something else: that they communicated, as she expressed it, "behind my back," and were not so much devoted to each other, which is all very proper and well, as interested in what each other thought. An unfortunate discovery gave her some pain. Fanny left her letters lying about, as young girls will, and Mrs. Abbey's eye was caught by the strange appearance of one of them. It was written in short lines, certainly just nonsense, yet she did not relish it, the more so since it was in John's handwriting, and he a notorious makegame.

Two or three Posies
With two or three simples —
Two or three Noses
With two or three pimples —
Two or three sandies
And two or three tabbies —
Two or three dandies
And two Mrs. —— mum!

Who might "Mrs. —— mum!" be? Mrs. Abbey reread the paragraph and then saw that it was a crambo or forfeit, the last line of which concealed her own name. She was affronted, the more so since the name must be in the plural gender. "Two Mrs. Abbeys," she repeated to herself. "And why two?" She inquired of her husband next time he came down from Pancras Lane, of Miss Caley, the headmistress of Fanny's school, of Miss Tucker, the headmistress of the school to which she was subsequently transferred.

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They all agreed that an unkindness was intended. She kept a lookout for John's letters in the future, and discovered in another that she was to be sent up to the London office "to count coffee-berries," while the grass plot was used for dancing. Elsewhere Fanny was to "pay no attention to Mrs. Abbey's unfeeling and ignorant gabble. You can't stop an old woman's crying any more than you can a child's. The old woman is the greatest nuisance, because she is too old for the rod. Many people live opposite a blacksmith's till they cannot hear the hammer." Here all was too plain, except, indeed, the blacksmith, whose forge was at the further extremity of the village; and Mrs. Abbey was obliged to take up a different line with Fanny. She would not allow the girl to go up to see her brother in town, and she discouraged his visiting Walthamstow.

How necessary her strictness was, the following anecdote will evince. While the children were deficient in character and breeding on the one side, they had inherited from their mother, Mrs. Rawlings, on the other, a tendency to consumption, and Tom was the first to sicken. Fanny professed to be heartbroken, and permission for a visit to his bedside could not well be withheld. She went up to Hampstead, and saw him, thus paying lip service to truth, but afterwards proceeded to act the fine lady, and made a round of calls with her brother John. She returned to Walthamstow in an unseemly state, could give Mrs. Abbey no interesting details as to the progress of Tom's malady, nothing but chatter about Mr. So-and-so and Miss T'other, what they said and ate and wore and contributed to the newspapers, and might she buy a magazine once a month, even if it meant giving up her spaniel, and she did not think Miss Tucker would object, for newspapers opened the world as Mr. Dilke had remarked, and Mrs. Dilke was at Brighton. She was easily silenced, but the Abbeys realized how susceptible she was to bad influences, and how sternly they must guard her against them. Letters like the following could not be indefinitely allowed to arrive:

"My Dear Fanny —

"I called on Mr. Abbey in the beginning of last week, when he seemed averse to letting you come again from having heard that you had been to other places besides Well Walk. I do not mean to say you did wrongly in speaking of it, for there should rightly be no objection to such things: but you know with what People we are obliged in the course of Childhood to associate,

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whose conduct forces us into duplicity and falsehood to them. . . . Perhaps I am talking too deeply for you: if you do not know, you will understand what I mean in the course of a few years. I think poor Tom is a little Better, he sends his love to you. I shall call on Mr. Abbey tomorrow: when I hope to settle when to see you again. Mrs. Dilke is expected home in a day or two. She will be pleased, I am sure, with your present. I will try for permission for you to remain all Night should Mrs. D. return in time.

"Your affectionate brother,

"JOHN."

Permission was refused. The Dilkes and their set were no companions for a growing girl of fourteen, and Fanny remained under discipline at the time of Tom's death. The discipline had even to be increased, as the following letter, dated four months later, indicates; it had proved impossible to keep her in a healthy and modest frame of mind without almost entirely forbidding any intercourse between her and the rest of her family; it had also proved desirable to remove her from Miss Tucker's, owing to the expense:

"MY DEAR FANNY —

"Your letter to me at Bedhampton hurt me very much. What objection can there be to your receiving a letter from me? At Bedhampton I was unwell and did not go out of the Garden Gate but twice or thrice during the fortnight I was there — Since I came back I have been taking care of myself — I have been obliged to do so, and am now in hopes that by this care I shall get rid of a sore throat which has haunted me at intervals nearly a twelvemonth. I always had a presentiment of not being able to succeed in persuading Mr. Abbey to let you remain longer at School — I am very sorry that he will not consent. I recommend you to keep up all that you know and to learn more by yourself, however little. The time will come when you will be more pleased with Life — look forward to that time, and though it may be a trifle be careful not to let the idle and retired Life you lead fix any awkward habit or behaviour on you — whether you sit or walk endeavour to let it be in a seemly and, if possible, a graceful manner. We have been very little together: but you have not the less been with me in thought. You have no one in the world besides me who would sacrifice anything for you — I feel myself the only Protector you have. In all your little troubles think of me with the thought that there is at least one person in England who, if he could, would help you out of them — I

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live in hopes of being able to make you happy — I should not perhaps write in this manner if it were not for the fear of not being able to see you often or long together. I am in hopes that Mr. Abbey will not object any more to your receiving a letter now and then from me. How unreasonable! . . .

"Your affectionate brother

"JOHN."

Though less coarse in tone than its predecessors, this letter was even more calculated to undermine authority. Oh, mark the impudence of calling life at Walthamstow "idle" — he who had never done a stroke of real work for years, had weakened his constitution by dissipation and drift, falling in love with his landlady's daughter, and had vainly tried, when it was too late, to continue his medical career and obtain a post as surgeon upon an East Indiaman! The "sore-throat" of which he complained was the precursor of the usual hereditary trouble, its later developments proving fatal. Kindly Mr. and Mrs. Abbey were distressed, and, Fanny herself falling ill, called in the family practitioner to attend her. Yet they could not but feel that sickness had all along been used to claim illicit privileges and to undermine their authority as guardians, and that just as in the case of Tom so in the case of John there had been duplicity. In view of his departure abroad, John was permitted to write his sister as often as he wished, and almost his last letter to her contained the venomous sentence, "In case my strength returns, I will do all in my power to extricate you from the Abbies." He could not even spell.

Blessed with excellent health himself, Mr. Abbey left illness to doctors. But in money matters he felt himself on firmer ground, and, a man of business through and through, brooked no interference in his own domain. When the three boys had abandoned the professions assigned to them, he could not prevent them, but he could cut off their supplies *whenever fit without giving a reason*. There was so much that boys could not understand. In the first place, the reinvestment of the £8,000 had, he owned frankly to himself, not been a success. In the second place, old Mr. Jennings, the original stableman, had left a confused will. He had died worth £13,160 19*s.* 5*d.*, £9,343 2*s.* of which had gone to his widow and thence in more compact form to the grandchildren as £8,000; but he had also left his grandchildren £1,000 direct and £50 a year besides in reversion after their mother's death.

Mr. Abbey was aware of these

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additional legacies, but they were not often in his mind, for, like all city men, he had much to think about, and he deemed it fitter to leave them alone; they would do no harm, the interest would accumulate in Chancery, and when documents came about them it was his habit to clear his throat and drop everything together into a safe. And as years went on and the children failed to mention the legacies to him, he ceased mentioning them to himself. He had so much to think about. After the first excitement of guardianship, he had done what nine men out of ten of substance would do in his place: nothing; so he said nothing. When John and George called with troubled faces at Pancras Lane and asked exactly how poor they were, he rightly replied, "This is no ordinary question," and silenced them by some reference to their own inexperience. Or, "Ask your Aunt Midgely," he would say. They knew not what he meant, nor did he, for Mrs. Midgely Jennings was unlikely to afford information, since she was herself dissatisfied with her income, and periodically threatened to bring suits, against whom or for what Mr. Abbey was not quite cognisant.

He was not clear either about the great Chancery suit, Rawlings *v.* Jennings, which the mother and grandmother had initiated by mutual consent in their lifetimes in order to clear up in an amicable spirit the obscurities of Mr. Jennings's will. Not one to interfere with another man's job, Mr. Abbey left law to the lawyers, and thanks to his attitude the Chancery suit lasted twenty years. Ah, he did not know much, but he always knew a little more than his wards; he performed that duty, and Tom and John remained ignorant until the day of their death, while Fanny believed for many years that she was a pauper and owed Mrs. Abbey for her board and lodging. Much extravagance was averted by this timely reticence, many loans to undesirable friends, and tours both in England and on the Continent, which could have led to no useful purposes. "Ever let the fancy roam, pleasure never is at home," wrote John to George openly in one of his letters; atrocious advice as coming from an elder brother to a younger, and alluding to the fact that George had decamped with the daughter of a sea-captain to America. All this Mr. Abbey realized, deprecated, and strove to check, and it was not his fault when Fanny terminated her connection with Walthamstow in the arms of a Spaniard.

The last years of the stewardship were very painful. Being small and

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sickly, and two of her brothers dead and the third abroad, Fanny seemed inclined to settle down. She spoke little, she dressed plainly, and never tossed her head when Mrs. Abbey repeated that she resembled her father, who had fallen off the horse, and that nought but idleness had ever been found on that side of the family. But, unfortunately, George came from America on a visit. Fanny was upset again, and all the careful accumulations of so many years came tumbling down. George was more robust than his brothers, had married, and had acquired a hard effrontery which passed for business ability among the Yankees, though it was not so estimated by Mr. Abbey. Retrenchment and deliberation were to Mr. Abbey the twin pillars of commercial achievement, he never hurried others and he did not expect to be hurried. He greeted the prodigal in measured tones, and received in reply a point-blank demand that the trust should be wound up. "Ask your Aunt Midgely," he said; but retorting that he knew whom to ask, George prepared to take the case into court. He insisted on the safe being opened, he discovered that the two additional legacies, ever Mr. Abbey's weak point, had been invested twenty years previously in Consols by order of the court, £1,550 7*s.* 10*d.* of Consols in the one case and £1,666 13*s.* 4*d.* in the other, and that the interest had been accumulating ever since his mother's death. He dragged every detail, including what had been paid as lawyers' fees, to the light, and before Mr. Abbey could collect himself had returned to America with £1,147 5*s.* 1*d.* in his pocket.

Worse was to follow; when Fanny came of age, which she did two years after George's visit, she claimed her share also. Mr. Abbey might have ceded it without protest, had she not claimed in addition the shares of her two dead brothers. Such rapacity was childish, and Mr. Abbey was quick to reply that the arrangement would be unfair tc George. Fanny retorted, "No, George's own wish!" and she applied to Mr. Dilke, who produced the necessary documents. Fanny annexed the balance, no less than £3,375 5*s.* 7*d.*, and quitted Walthamstow. Her Spanish adventurer married her soon afterwards, but Mr. and Mrs. Abbey could never feel it retribution sufficient. Bitter words had passed, Fanny insolently hinting that if Tom and John had been given their proper dues, the additional procurable comfort might have prolonged their lives.

Of course it would not have, and in any case what is the use of such

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people, Mr. Abbey could not help thinking as he sat at Walthamstow in the evening of his own life. Now that the worrying and badgering was over and the trust that he had so faithfully administered was filched from him, now that Rawlings *v.* Jennings was wound up, and idle verses about his wife no longer fell through the letter-box, he could not feel that his four wards had ever existed in the sense in which he, in which Mrs. Abbey, in which Miss Abbey and the conservatory existed. Already were they forgotten — George in America, Fanny in Spain, Tom in the graveyard of St. Stephen's, Coleman Street, John at Rome. On the tomb of the last-mentioned had been placed a text which rather pleased the old gentleman, despite its fanciful wording. He found it appropriate to the whole family. "Here lies one whose name was writ in water," it said. He had written in water himself once with the point of a wet umbrella, and he remembered that almost before the servant arrived to open the door, his signature had evaporated. He himself has expressed the same truth in the one letter of his that has been preserved, a business letter addressed to Messrs. Taylor and Hessey, publishers, Waterloo Place; he has summed up once for all the world's judgment upon inefficiency:

Your Editor interrupts this story just before the final paragraph — the letter to which Richard Abbey refers. Undoubtedly you have wondered why this tale is printed in a detective-story magazine. It relates no crime. It contains no detective character. It presents no mystery — in the usual meaning of the word. And yet there is *a riddle.*

Do you see the astonishing point of this story? Have you penetrated the author's secret purpose? Don't feel chagrined if you haven't: the secret is most ingeniously hidden. And yet you've been given every clue — the names, the date, the medical details — indeed, all the cunningly insinuated facts. Did you note, for example, the words "Rome" and "publishers"?

You are still in the dark? Then finish Mr. Forster's unique and beautifully written tale. The surprise ending is to be found in the last word of the first paragraph of Mr. Abbey's letter.

Pancras Lane, Cheapside,
April 18, 1821.

"Sir —

"I beg pardon for not replying to your favour of the 30th ult. respecting the late Mr. Jno. Keats.

"I am obliged by your note, but he having withdrawn himself from my controul, and acted contrary to my advice, I cannot interfere with his affairs.

"I am, Sir, Yr. mo. Hble. St.,
"Richard Abbey."

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Here is a strange, strange story . . .

The style will remind you of others — a hint of Dos Passos, an overtone of M. P. Shiel, an aura of James Joyce.

In their letter to your Editor, the authors wrote: "We may be profoundly mistaken, but we think we owe a good deal to the motion picture. For the motion picture is able to create a mood of unreal reality by means of quick, sharp, shifting images ('rapid cross-cutting'). We have utilized the same technique. . . . To maintain the staccato quality we have in many instances eliminated spaces after punctuation marks. We have also taken advantage of the common motion picture practice of employing music to heighten a response or to create an air of expectancy. So in the scene of the first death, and later, we introduced 'Alexander's Ragtime Band' — a tune so well-known that we felt the reader might subconsciously hum it to himself."

Slowly, increasingly, inexorably, this frankly experimental technique will get under your skin, and in the end you will possess, and be possessed with, a long lingering memory of the man in the velvet hat. . . .

An original story never before published anywhere.

THE MAN IN THE VELVET HAT

by JEROME and HAROLD PRINCE

THERE were no searchlights that night. Far down at the end of the corridor, black, no moonlight through the long open windows, voices, low then loud, slipped through the concrete from the office behind the walls, loud then low, a mumble, a chatter, a senility of sounds. Then a block of light crashed into the hallway — the door of the office was swinging back — and the sounds became laughter, voices, a clarinet's tune — *Come on along, Come on along, Alexander's Ragtime Band* — and the doorknob cracked hard against a retaining wall. Shadows, three dimensional, bulged into the doorway; the block of light was veined with moving strata of black, of grey — *It's the best band in the land* — someone, soprano, was singing; voices were hiccoughing, saying, good-bye, merry Christmas, good-bye, merry Christmas, good-bye, good-bye. Good-bye, a deep voice answered, good-bye, good-bye, good-bye — *played in ragtime, Come on along, Come on along, Alexander's*

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Ragtime Band — merry Christmas. Then the shadows stumbled back from the doorway; the man, alone in the corridor, the light upon him, wobbled, grinned, wiped lipstick from his face, straightened his tie, his hat. The office door clicked shut. There was no light now, and only a whispered jazz-tune growing fainter; and the man's footsteps sounded loud as they moved up the corridor, sounded louder as they moved more rapidly, seemed one burst of noise as the man began to run. And then there was no sound at all.

When the police found his body in the alley two hours later, there was something ugly where his head had been. The short investigation that followed was decisive. Within an hour, the police had learned that the dead man was a boiler salesman, John Mongon; that he was twenty-six-years old, had no enemies; and that his death could not possibly have resulted from foul play. Both the plain-clothesmen assigned to the case and the local uniformed officer agreed that Mongon, drunk, or, at least, strongly under the influence of liquor, had left his company's Christmas party at 11:00 P.M. on Monday, December 17th, during the height of a practice blackout; that, unable to find his way in the dark, he had walked by the elevator shaft, and, then, somehow, had slipped and plunged through an open casement window. It was death by accident, and so far as the police were concerned, the case was closed, despite the morning mail which brought the same letter to Magruder as it did to Reynolds.

Magruder probably never saw the letter that day — it must have been pigeonholed by that clerical machine which is efficient because it has learned not to discriminate — or, if he did see the letter, he had seen so many like it in his long career as a police official that he must have returned it summarily for the clerical machine to pigeonhole. But Reynolds had to see the letter; he had to read it; it was his job. For years now, as a feature writer of that New York daily, as a contributor to the smartest of the slick magazines, he had made a reputation by describing, as Stevenson and Arthur Machen had once done, the romance lurking just beyond the pavement: the unusual, the macabre which rubbed elbows with you in the Polo Grounds, on the B.M.T., along the Bowery, in the middle of Central Park. His early works — he was very young then — were brilliant fantasies, derivatives of James Stephens, Lord Dunsany, Charles Fort, with, if you can imagine it, a strong dose of Ben Hecht and a good deal of O.

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Henry. But, as he, and his bank account, grew fatter, the rigid discipline which is necessary for the creation of the unreality which is real, was, after a small struggle, forgotten, and his poetry became facts, his dreams, articles. People had come to him — all sorts of queer people — telling him queer tales; and letters, from Massilon, Ohio, and others with strange stamps and stranger script had brought the outré into his study. Most of those yarns — the identity of Hitler's wife, the man who was Crater, the route to Shangri-La — were, Reynolds had found, amateurish and scarcely original lies; but he had been surprised to learn that some of the stories were true, and he had been even more surprised to learn that the publication of these stories, whether true or or not, earned him more money than he had ever made before. It became his practice thereafter to listen closely to his visitors, to read his mail carefully, and whenever something interested him, to place a large red-crayon check on the relevant documents; and sometimes he would investigate these documents before publication, and sometimes he would not.

Check. *My dear Mr. Reynolds, It was My whim two hours ago to take home with Me to Eternity, My son, known in this life as John Mongon.* Monday, December 18th. It was post-marked 1:00 A. M.

Check. *My dear Mr. Reynolds, In a swift chariot, I have taken Edward Tucker home to Glory.* Tuesday, December 19th.

Check. *My dear Mr. Reynolds, Five have been purified by flames, and are at peace within My heart.* Wednesday, December 20th.

Check. *My dear Mr. Reynolds, I have said love little children, and so I have taken her from suffering to Eternal Happiness.* Thursday, December 21st.

Check. *My dear Mr. Reynolds, Let he who is without sin cast the first stone, so she, too, now knows her God.* Friday, December 22nd.

Check. *My dear Mr. Reynolds, I saw Peter Savitcky to-day and I knew he was a good man. Peter Savitcky is not longer with you, but with Me in Celestial Happiness; and you must not, John Reynolds, hope that I shall come for you, for I have not willed it, and your time is not yet come. Nor will I be pleased if you seek me out, even though you cannot. You cannot. You cannot find Me, John Reynolds, and do not ask your police to help you. They find criminals, John Reynolds, here they must find a crime.* By special delivery, Saturday, December 23rd.

Check. *And on the Seventh Day He rested.* By telegram, Sunday,

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December 24th.

It was with the arrival of the seventh message on Christmas Eve that the events crystallized for Reynolds — and this he reported later — into a Mendeleyev chart of crime, with gaps in the future for events that must occur, with gaps in the past for events that had occurred but had not been observed. It was then that he decided to investigate the incidents of the last week and to find the unknown that he knew must exist. He acted immediately. A telephone call to the office of Western Union brought him no results: the telegram had been dictated from a pay-station in the Borough Hall section of Brooklyn; yes, it was a man; no, I couldn't identify the voice; yes, I'm sure. Another call to the local police station wasted a nickel. And the woman who answered the telephone at Magruder's apartment was polite, but nothing could make her admit Magruder was at home. Reynolds dialed another number.

Then without shaving: from lounging pajamas into tweed, a camel's-hair coat, the Hudson on his left, cold wind against his cheeks, the lights of George Washington Bridge growing nearer, behind him now, the screech of his tires on dirty snow, snowflakes on his collar as he stepped from the car. The man was waiting for him, wanting to hear more; but when he heard what Reynolds had to say, he laughed quietly; and when Reynolds continued, excited now, insisting, the man was impatient; and when Reynolds began to argue, his red hair falling over his eyes, constantly being brushed back with a tic-like gesture, the man said, "Listen, mister, I don't know if you are who you say you are, and I don't care. But get this straight. Peter Savitcky was my brother. If anybody knows anything about him, I know, and I'm telling you this for the last time: my brother died of pneumonia and nothing else."

Then the car again, down a Broadway slippery with ice, across town, under an El, over car-tracks and cobblestones, dark tenements on both sides of him, then a small brownstone house, shades pulled down on the windows, stained curtains over a large glass door. She answered the bell — her kimono was clinging tightly to her body — "What you want, white man?" she said; and Reynolds talked, as he had to Peter Savitcky's brother, as he knew he must talk; but she just laughed, "Ain't worth worrying about, mister," she said; and when Reynolds muttered something in a low voice, "I ain't afraid. She was a no-good woman and she got what

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was coming to her. I saw the streetcar cut her in two, and it was nobody's fault but her own. I swear to God" — she kissed the tip of her small finger and held it high in the air — "I swear to God."

He walked now, a few blocks south to a four-story building of the old type. There was black crepe, already dirty and torn, hanging in the vestibule; the stairs were rotten, insects scurried across the walls; there was black crepe, dirty, too, and torn, hanging on a wooden door two flights up. Inside, it was cold: there was no steam, no stove. An old woman sat on a wooden box, staring in front of her, moaning, softly. When Reynolds spoke to her she whimpered. A neighbor said, "Don't. She's almost out of her mind"; and when Reynolds turned to him questioning, "You're crazy. Her grandmother told her to stay off the ice. A six-year-old girl don't listen. And what could an old lady do?"

He drove across town again, then down the highway, the snow falling more heavily now, the East River dull white, the sound of his tires a soporific crunch; then slush under his wheels as he turned back into the city, pushcarts, delicatessens, slums, a thin red house, skeletal, charred, and a fireman bending his face down to the car window, talking rapidly, and Reynolds answering, arguing, trying to win his point by logic, curses, until the fireman laughed and Reynolds heard him say what the others had said. "But don't you understand," Reynolds still insisted, "that a man smoking in bed could *not* have caused this fire"; but the fireman only smiled, "I don't know anything about that," he said. "Maybe the five guys who were toasted in this little barbecue could tell you more"; and Reynolds shifted gears, cried, "Merry Christmas."

If he were to have continued his journey back into time, his next stop would have been the Coliseum in the Bronx; but the case of Edward Tucker who had made his living driving midget racing cars and who had met his death in one, was more blatantly accidental than any of the others; and, besides, it was now nearly eleven. Instead, Reynolds drove west, stopping at a drugstore near Fulton Street and Broadway. He waited until a phone booth cleared, then spoke into the mouthpiece for several minutes. When he came out, he was sweating, and the night air made him shudder, but he walked up the block to the bookstore on the corner, slumped, tired, against the wall of the building, waited. In five minutes, a boy-sized young man wearing an incipient

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moustache of indeterminate color — pants pegged tightly about his ankles, topcoat hugging his waist, mushrooming widely over his shoulders, low-crowned, all-brim hat perching on the back of his head — approached Reynolds uneasily, finally held out his hand.

"Mr. Reynolds? I'm Larry."

Reynolds took his hand, made the customary remarks, then spoke rapidly.

"Gee, no, Mr. Reynolds. Gee Whiz, no!"

For the next few minutes, his back turned to Larry, Reynolds read a hundred titles in the bookstore window and remembered none; then, facing Larry again, he said quietly,

"Larry, this is more important to you than it is to me, or anybody else. Tell me, on the night Mongon fell through the window did you take anybody up to the party who didn't belong there?"

"No, sir."

"Larry, are you sure?"

"Sure, I'm sure."

"Now, listen, Larry, you know who I am, don't you? That's right. I can make you a pretty famous fellow, Larry — your picture in the paper, everybody talking about you — if you can remember what you saw last Monday night."

"I don't get you, Mr. Reynolds. I told you I saw nobody else."

"Are you sure, Larry? Could you swear to it if you had to in court — particularly if somebody else knew you were mistaken. Larry, our memories are curious things; they play us tricks. Larry, try to remember if you brought anybody else up in the elevator that night — somebody you never saw before."

"Mr. Reynolds, you got me all mixed up. I don't know what you mean."

"Larry! You know what I mean. Oh, all right, we'll pay you fifty dollars for your story. Now tell me, what happened when you saw him?"

Larry said, "Maybe you mean the tall guy who came in at a quarter to eleven?"

Reynolds said, "Of course. Now let's have it."

Larry moistened his lips.

"He comes in — it's pretty late. I say, 'Floor, please?' He says, 'Twelve' I say, 'There ain't nobody on twelve.' He don't say a word. I say, 'The party's on sixteen.' He just ignores me. So I take him up."

"You never saw him before?"

"Never."

"Now what did he look like, besides being tall?"

"You got me there, Mr. Reynolds. I — "

"You must have seen his face. That's a pretty bright light in your

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elevator. Unless . . . he had his hat pulled down so you couldn't see his face. Was that it, Larry? Did he have his hat pulled down over his face?"

"Sure. That's what it was. He had his hat pulled down over his face."

"What kind of hat was it?"

"Black."

"Black? That's all?"

"Well, an ordinary hat. Old, though. Fuzzy."

"Fuzzy? Like old velvet?"

"If you say so."

"Not if I say so. Was it?"

"O.K., Mr. Reynolds, O.K. It was like you say — velvet. He wore a raincoat," Larry added.

"Good. What color?"

"Pretty dark. Brown. Dark brown."

"That's fine, Larry. Now one thing more, and be very careful that you remember this properly: what time did he come down?"

Larry's face was expressionless.

"He never did come down," he said.

Reynolds opened his wallet.

The remainder of that night was, as Reynolds reported it, an adventure in Freudian psychology: an attempt to restore to the consciousness the memory of the man in the velvet hat which was lost in the hinterland of many minds. (*Now, relax, Bessie. Put your head back on the pillow. Close your eyes — and talk, Bessie. Talk about anything that comes into your mind, Bessie, anything at all. How she walked, Bessie. How she walked when the street-car hit her. Anything, Bessie, anything that comes into your mind.* a tall man black *Anything, Bessie, no matter how small it is, no matter how silly it sounds.* velvet raincoat a tall man black *No matter how silly it sounds, Savitcky, let me know.* a tall man a velvet hat *No matter how silly.* tall black a velvet hat *Here, grandmother, let me fix the pillow under your head. Just relax, rest, rest, rest.* tall black a velvet hat *Rest.* atallmanabrownraincoat avelvethat *Head back on the pillow.* abrownraincoatavelvet

Slowly. Slowly. atallmanatallatallmanabrownraincoat a velvet hat. . . . *A dozen people have sworn that they saw this man talking to the doctor during your brother's crisis. Savitcky, I don't give a damn one way or another, but the police are going to be mighty unpleasant if* you *deny that you saw him. That suits me, Bessie, but I don't have to remind you that the police and my newspaper might be interested in the business you do. A hundred dollars now; the rest, grandmother, when you find that picture of your daughter. The others swore that they saw this man, surely you're not going to be the only exception?*) And

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by the morning of Christmas day, Reynolds had in his possession the written testimony of seven witnesses; and by the evening of Christmas day, he said later, he had completed his pattern, and had finished what was to be the first of a series of articles.

In that story which appeared early on the afternoon of December 26th, Reynolds sketched the death-scenes of the eight men, the woman, the child, introduced the contents of the letters, stressing the apparent God-substitution schizophrenia; and then made it impossible for the reader to doubt the existence of some agency behind each of the noncriminal acts. How he had searched for that agency and how he had finally identified it as the man in the black velvet hat, he then told in a sequence of exclamation points, culminating in an accusation of murder. "But if murder has been done, and if this man is a murderer" — and now Reynolds was writing as he had a hundred times before — "he is a murderer such as the world has never known, or, perhaps, such as the world has always known, but never seen. There is no motive for any of his crimes, no evidence of lust or of envy, of passion or of gain. He kills by caprice, through kindness, by whim, or by some deep underlying necessity. Certainly, if this man is not a God, he has not only successfully adopted the posturings of one, but the psychic attributes as well. Where he walks, death walks — and this man may be Death himself."

There was no comment on the yarn from Magruder, nothing about it in the later editions of the other evening papers, just a casual reference to it by an obscure radio newscaster; but dozens of people came to see Reynolds, others telegraphed or telephoned, and each swore that he had seen the man in the black velvet hat just before or just after a death by accident or by suicide or by disease. Reynolds remembered particularly, an old Italian woman — her face was a tangle of hard grey threads — who crossed herself as she talked, about her son: dying, slowly, screams clinging to the house, the Blessed Saint and prayer, kissing a silver crucifix as she talked, prayer on bony knees in damp churches, again and again and again, then convalescence in the sunlight, laughter in the sunlight, a blanket over his knees, gay in a wheel-chair, laughing, she laughing, too, then a tall man walking in the sunlight, a brown raincoat close to his rib-thin body, a black velvet hat pulled down hard over his eyes, we, laughing in the sunlight, Holy Mother how we laughed in the sunlight, a lean shadow down the street, a lean shadow falling on her son, a silent

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passing — she kissed the crucifix again — and death. Others remembered that story, too: it was dramatized on several radio news programs almost immediately after its publication under Reynolds' byline; it appeared, re-written, in several current news magazines, in every other paper in New York; it served to introduce the man in the black velvet hat to seven million New Yorkers, and to create, if nothing else, a sense of expectation which was the prelude to the change which came over the city after the eighth letter was made public on Thursday night.

My dear Mr. Reynolds, it read, *Do not deceive yourself. I have been silent, but I have not rested, nor have I ever rested. I shall continue to choose as I have always chosen, as the whim strikes me; and as the whim strikes me, so shall I tell. You will not always know, John Reynolds, how merciful I have been.*

On the following morning, many newspapers began the practice of publishing a daily list of accidental — they printed it "accidental" — deaths in a black-lined box on their front pages; but there was, apparently, no excitement, except in the voices of radio announcers; no panic, except for those few who had seen the man in the velvet hat; no fear, except for the quasi-supernatural warnings of Reynolds and the paraphrases of his colleagues. New York seemed to go about its affairs with its customary indifference; but on that Friday night business began to boom in the night clubs, and flop shows dusted off the standing-room-only signs. The Broadway area during the next few days was so crowded that it often took an hour to walk from Fifty-ninth to Forty-second Street. At the Stork Club, at the Famous Door, at 21, at Fefe's Monte Carlo more people were turned away in one week than had been admitted in the previous six. Eight new jazz bands were imported: six from Chicago, two from New Orleans. The waiting lines to the larger motion picture houses were often as long as two city blocks. There were no cabs to be had at all in the midtown area. At Macy's, in five other department stores, the Bible topped all book sales. Restaurants placed their chairs back to back; and a local comic added to his act a sketch of Casper Milquetoast trying to drink a brimming glass of milk at Dinty Moore's. But on January 5th, all that stopped.

By curtain time of that day, four men and two women had already died, and of the six others at the Polyclinic Hospital, only two were to survive. Most reporters, including Reynolds, credited the first scream ("I did it to warn the others," she

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said) to a small upholstered woman of about forty; others placed the blame on a middle-aged male neurasthenic, on an unemployed salesman, on a high school girl. But the official report submitted to Magruder spoke of the cause of the *panic as a simultaneity of shouts and* screams, and of the impossible task of fixing responsibility on any known person: by the time the police had arrived, there was no trace of the man in the black velvet hat, and no one had seen him enter the Radio Building, and no one had seen him leave. But more than two hundred people of the studio audience swore that they had rushed by him just after the first screams — and all New York knew that Reynolds must have received that ninth letter, even though he did not publish it. His column of the next day, denying receipt of the letter, stridently proving — and this was not at all in Reynolds' style — that there could be no connection between the incidents at the radio station and the man in the velvet hat, was met by New York with the same cynicism with which it meets all mollifying propaganda — and it was after that, late on Sunday night, that Reynolds and Magruder came face to face for the first time.

They sat opposite each other, across a small round table, lamplight hushing the ugliness of the room, steam hissing fitfully from a radiator, an old electric clock wheezing, ticking loudly, Reynolds, Magruder, watching each other, listening to the Mayor's footsteps as he walked on the thinly carpeted floor, Magruder a bludgeon, a roll of fat curving over the Mayor's high white stiff collar like a half-baked doughnut, walking, Reynolds sweating, the Mayor talking on and on, pacing up and down, Magruder's eyes hard on Reynolds, on and on, Magruder *Listen, Reynolds, I've been a policeman for forty years. I've seen them come and go. Tricks don't fool me.* Across the room, his hands behind his back, mop of hair in his eyes, shouting, hands on the table, his face close to theirs, walking again, Magruder saying nothing, Reynolds blinking the sting of a sweat-drop from his eye, Magruder *I've walked beats on nights so cold that fat body of yours would have shrivelled: I have a bullet buried somewhere in my chest.* The steam screeching from the radiator, the Mayor's words drowned in it, weather strips along the windows, fog liquefying against the panes, the Mayor smashing his pudgy fist on the table, asking a question, quiet now.

"Maybe there isn't any murderer," Magruder said. "Not in the

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ordinary sense."

Reynolds tried to say, then said, "I believe there is."

Magruder went on talking. "The letters that Reynolds got came to us, too. You know that. We checked each one — different typewriter, different stationery, no fingerprints. I don't know if one man wrote them. Or, if he did, he's the cleverest crank I've ever come across. And even if it is the work of one man, there's nothing to connect the writer of the letters with murder. Except for that little picnic at the radio station, every death was accidental or natural as sure as we three are in this room."

The Mayor dragged a small armchair from a corner of the room, forced himself into it, formed a triangle around the table. The clock was ticking more loudly than ever.

Magruder said, "I'd like to put the screws on some of those people who saw the man in the velvet hat. I'd like to bet he'd disappear just like —" He snapped his fingers.

Reynolds stood up. The perspiration on his body had turned cold. The Mayor talked directly to Magruder.

"Forget it." His shrill voice was always pitched to a key of anger. It hid, perhaps, what may have been other emotional states. "You couldn't prove it if you had until Doomsday to do it, and if you did no one would believe you. To them, the man in the velvet hat is real, and there's panic."

Magruder lit his pipe, blew out the match. "That's not so. Not in New York. There never will be panic in New York."

"Magruder! Magruder, you think a panic is what happened at the radio station. Somebody screams, 'He's here!' and people lose their heads and trample each other to death. You can't imagine the whole city acting like that. I can't either. But a panic in New York is a cold thing. Listen to me. How's show business? Did you ever see Times Square as empty as you did last night? What was the attendance at the basketball carnival? People are avoiding crowds. They won't admit it. They won't even think it, but what happened at the radio station, they're afraid will happen again. And they're just afraid. They're scared blue, Magruder."

Reynolds sat down, unbuttoned his vest, straightened his tie, then buttoned his vest. He said,

"Why don't you catch him?"

The Mayor grasped Magruder's coat lapel. "I want to stop all this. Show them that we can stop it — if there is no man in the velvet hat, invent one, and get him."

"That won't help." Reynolds'

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voice was louder than the ticking of the clock. "He'll murder again. It will be worse."

"I won't do it," said Magruder. "That's not my style."

The Mayor drummed with his child-sized fingers on the liquor-stained, coffee-stained surface of the table; Reynolds looked from one to the other, trying to catch an expression on their averted faces; the steam began to hammer and sizzle in the risers. Magruder knocked ashes from his pipe, a dying cinder glowing on the rug.

"The way I see it," Magruder's tone was speculative, his voice low, "the thing is either a hoax, or there is a man in the velvet hat — perhaps a crank, perhaps a murderer. If we can prove the hoax, or catch our man, the panic, such as it is, disappears. I think we can do it — with Reynolds's co-operation. . . . I'm going to challenge the man in the velvet hat — and Reynolds is going to publish that challenge. I'm going to say that I don't think he's a God, and I don't think he's a good criminal. I'm going to say, I don't even think he *is* a criminal — anybody can boast of a murder after its happened, but only a master criminal can boast of a murder before it's happened — and get away with it."

The Mayor smiled; his whole face became a series of semi-circles curving upwards.

"You see the implications," Magruder went on, as slowly as before. "If he doesn't accept the challenge, or if he does accept the challenge and doesn't show up — " He made a gesture indicating finality. "And if he accepts the challenge and tries to succeed, we'll nab him. In either case, the thing is done. Can I count on Reynolds' help?"

The Mayor said, "Yes."

Reynolds had picked up his hat and cane. He was on his feet, walking to the door. He stopped, turned about.

"My own guess is," he was trying to make himself heard above the banging of the steam, the ticking of the clock, "that he will accept the challenge, and that when he does, you will not nab him."

And then it was night again, the Times Building a pale shadow across the street, sounds centrifuged at him, amoeba-forms of clouds tasting and disgorging a full white moon, hints of rain slapping his cheeks, jazz from the dance hall overhead, a drunken clown shouting, "Nine o'clock and all's well. Nine o'clock and all's well." *Come on along, Come on along, Alexander's Ragtime Band.* The illuminated dial of his watch told Magruder that it was only three minutes to nine, three more minutes,

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three minutes to nine. *it's the bestest band what am* Simon and Thompson were in front of the Times Building. Burke and LaMantia were in the lobby. Rowan was across the street on Seventh Avenue. The homicide squad was scattered over the theatrical district. He wanted to, but he didn't dare increase the uniformed police force. No one else knew — only Reynolds, himself, his assistant, Kuchatsky, and the man who wrote the note — written this time in medieval script, delicate colors on yellow parchment. *if you want to hear the Swanee River* Two minutes, two minutes more, two minutes. Anyway, it's over with. After to-night . . . *At nine o'clock, precisely, on Wednesday night, January tenth, a man will die, poisoned, in front of the Times Building. After this I will move again in silence, for only those without faith need signs.* There was a glinting sheet of rain in front of him now. *honey lamb honey lamb* Kuchatsky slipped under the awning dripping wet, a stream of water running from his hat. We thought we had him, Chief. In front of the Majestic, fit the description to a T, turned out to be one of our own boys from Staten Island. They laughed. Another minute, one more minute, less now, less than a minute. *Alexander's Ragtime Band.* Keep your eyes open. Cars were sliding on the water-smooth asphalt. The traffic cops cursed. I see by the clock, Chief, that it's nine o'clock. Done. We'll stick around, maybe his watch is slow. They laughed. Another plain-clothesman elbowed his way through to the awning. He was sweating, but he was grinning. Overhead they were beginning to jam it, bass fiddle throbbing, traps coughing out hoarse subliminals. A man was standing on the Seventh Avenue curb, watching the cars. *ragtime ragtime ragtime* The man was wearing no hat; he was carrying a coat under his arm. He was watching the sliding cars carefully. *come on come on come on along* A trumpet pleading.

The man leapt. Magruder started forward. The man was avoiding the cars, weaving like a basketball player, running hard. Somebody called him a damn-fool. He was running toward the wedge-end of the Times Building, drenched to the skin.

come on along bugle call in the land in the land

The man was more than half way across. The traffic cop was shouting at him. Magruder was waving at Simon and Thompson in the lobby of the Times Building. They didn't see him. The man's coat in the dim-out-blackness could have been any color, but it was cloth, tweed.

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The man had reached the sidewalk in front of the Times Building. There was some light on him. He was tall and thin. He fumbled in his pocket.

It was the clarinet's lick now. He was warming up, playing it straight for a few bars. *it's the best band in the land if you want to hear* The man was raising his hand to his mouth, gulping out of a tiny bottle — and then he began to crumble, liquidly, like a trick shot from a motion picture.

Magruder began to sprint. Kuchatsky blew his whistle. Thompson and Simon were already bending over the man. The others were running, too. The traffic cop was trying to hold off the crowd.

Magruder said, "Take him to a hospital."

Simon said, "He's dead as a doornail."

Then Magruder looked at the man. He knew he had never seen that pain-distorted face before, drops of water pounding on open eyes. He knelt and closed the eyelids. Then he picked up the man's coat, held it in his hand. It was light, too light. He shook it. Oilskin glistened where lining should have been. He turned the coat inside out. It was a raincoat, now, and brown. Out of one pocket crumpled, jutted a black velvet hat.

Kuchatsky tugged at Magruder's sleeve. "Look, Chief, the boys say he dropped it just before he kicked off." Folded vellum, tied with a string; Magruder, automatically untying the string, blocked Gothic letters, in red, in blue, rain covering them with a wavering film — *And God*, it read, *so loved this world that He gave His only begotten Son.*

Traffic had stopped; there was an excited crowd-whisper all about, but across the street, the jazz-men were taking a rest. Magruder began to whistle softly. The tune was, "Alexander's Ragtime Band."

Then the Mayor said, seesawing on the swivel chair behind Magruder's desk, "This is thanks," — winter sunlight breaking against Venetian blinds, the room soft shadows, Magruder leaning under a photograph, Reynolds grinning — "man to man, this is thanks." And Magruder, irritated, playing with the tassels of the blinds, sucking on a long-cold pipe, saying, "Yes, yes, we have a good deal to thank Reynolds for." And Reynolds, easy on the leather lounge, his red hair parted, smooth, the points of his white handkerchief distinct against the brown covert of his suit, bland, happy, saying the proper things — "So, Reynolds, this is thanks, but you surprised me." "When he died that way, even *I* thought the thing

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was supernatural. 'Don't have to give me odds,' I said, 'that Reynolds will play it up for all he's worth, and leave us in a worse mess than we were before.' Not surprised?" Magruder's head pivoting in negation.

"Why should you be surprised?" asked Reynolds. "I admit, I'd fancy a supernatural ending to a natural one. After all, that's my trade. But when Magruder told me about the suicide — about his being insane, I mean, what could I think? It was clear then that he couldn't have been associated with the crimes in that inexplicable manner I dreamt of. Actually, there were no crimes; he must have attached his mad ego to each death after the fact. How he got the information so quickly, I don't know; but Magruder says it's easy enough. And once he knew, he appeared at or near the scene of the death in that striking costume, and then he posted the letters. That some witnesses swore he appeared before the deaths, well that's a human failing, isn't it?

"He was a true psychopath; there's no doubt about that. In his own diseased brain, he was a death-dealing but merciful God, taking to rest those who were 'heavy laden', or rewarding the Good of the earth with the joys of Paradise; and even to the end, he was madly consistent, sacrificing himself rather than admit his inability to meet Magruder's challenge. . . . "There was no other way to see it, agreed? That's what I wrote."

"It was enough," said the Mayor. "It brought us back to normalcy." And Magruder striding to his desk, standing over the Mayor, "I have work to do," he said. They, arising, making apologies, the Mayor, his back to Magruder, chuckling, the Mayor, walking to the door, outside in the corridor, Reynolds still in the room, at the door, the Mayor turning to Reynolds, winking, Reynolds adjusting his scarf, the Mayor poking Reynolds in the ribs with his elbow, shouting, "Listen, Magruder. Congratulations to you, too. That challenge idea — it was brilliant," laughing silently; and Magruder, head bent over his desk, reports scattered about him, answering softly, "Was it? It amazes me that a hundred lunatics didn't show up, not just one." The Mayor laughing freely now, Magruder head low, footsteps fainter, the glass door closing with a quiver, Magruder busy, reading, annotating, scribbling on a small white pad, yawning, stretching, looking up. Reynolds was standing in front of him.

"Yes?"

Staccato, "It was a queer case, Magruder, wasn't it? Not really knowing . . . All that . . ."

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"Yes?"

"I had the right hunch from the beginning. . . . Kept it to myself, you know. . . . Interesting study . . . Lunacy . . ."

"Yes."

"Funny thing, though. About the lunatic, I mean. You never did find out who he really was, did you?"

"Look here, Reynolds, I had you pegged from the start." He turned again to his paper-disarrayed desk.

Reynolds stood where he was. "What do you mean," he asked, " 'pegged from the start?' "

Magruder looked up.

"Interested?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I don't know precisely. Curiosity. Was it because you thought I had easy access to the information — my being a newspaperman, I mean?"

"Maybe."

"Do you think I gave the information to the man in the velvet hat?"

"No. . . . I never thought there was a man in the velvet hat. I thought you wrote the letters."

"I? *You* had as easy access to the information as I had. Why didn't *you* write the letters?"

"I had no motive."

"Motive! What motive could I have?"

Magruder said, "I'm an old-fashioned cop, Reynolds, and I always ask, 'Who gains?' You gained — in more ways than one. Do you remember what you wrote after that Orson Welles broadcast. 'If he had done that deliberately,' you said — oh, I don't know if I'm quoting you exactly — you said, 'then it would have been the grimmest but the most satisfactory of literary achievements.' "

"That!"

"Not only that. You had access; you had motive; and it was you who supplied the witnesses and interviewed them before anyone else. It would have been easy for you to have fixed the details of the man in the velvet hat in their minds by coercion, by bribery —"

Magruder said, "Maybe we found the typewriters. Maybe we didn't; but if we didn't you can be sure that we will. Maybe I was so sure because I knew beforehand what you'd do after the panic at the radio station. You never could have anticipated the screams of an exhibitionist female — and homicide frightened you. I knew you'd claim there was no letter; I knew you'd deny any connection between the man in the velvet hat and the deaths at the radio station, because the game was getting out of hand, and your wind was up."

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Reynolds said, "So that was what you thought."

"That is what I think."

And Reynolds, wiping his face with his pocket handkerchief, "A beautiful theory, Magruder, but spoiled by an ugly fact—" Magruder tilting back in his swivel chair, Reynolds waving good-bye, "There was a man in the velvet hat, Magruder—" Magruder filling his pipe, Reynolds, back to Magruder, walking to the door,— "and you have him," scarf adjusted, hat set right, hand on the doorknob.

Magruder saying, "But we haven't the man in the velvet hat."

And Reynolds stopping, turning on one foot, facing Magruder, Magruder puffing on his pipe, Reynolds walking slowly again toward the desk, "How do you know?" Magruder laughing.

"Because the man we found dead was released from an asylum *only two days before* you published my challenge. He couldn't have been the man in the velvet hat all those other times — not while he was *in* the asylum."

And Reynolds sober, then frantic, his palms flat on Magruder's desk, his body leaning over the desk, Magruder swinging forward to meet him, Reynolds, Magruder, faces inches apart, Magruder shouting, "You wrote your script. Then you got some poor diseased brain — bribery, coercion, again — to play your principal role."

Reynolds trying to say something, the door opening behind him, a little fat man, perspiring, Kuchatsky, happy, shoving the little man in front of him, Kuchatsky, "Here he is, Chief. From a second-hand typewriter store in Flatbush."

Then Kuchatsky pointing to Reynolds, the second-hand dealer squinting, nodding, "That's him!", nodding, nodding, "That's the man, that's the man!"

And Reynolds blurting, "For God's sake, Magruder, listen to me. When I began, I never dreamt—"

Magruder spoke slowly. "I talked to the D.A. this morning," he said "He didn't think we could make a charge of homicide stick. . . . But that was this morning, Reynolds, that was this morning."

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One of the most famous legends of detective-storydom is the tale of the mother and daughter who arrive in a Paris hotel. Remember? — the mother takes seriously ill, the daughter goes out to fetch a doctor, and when she returns the mother has vanished. In the best versions the room in which the girl left her mother has also vanished — and everyone in the hotel insists that there never was a mother, that the girl arrived alone.

This story has grown to the stature of folk-lore. Many writers have given it a whirl. Perhaps the finest oldtime version is Sir Basil Thomson's "The Vanishing of Mrs. Fraser," in MR. PEPPER, INVESTIGATOR *(London, John Castle, 1925).*

Now John Dickson Carr tries his hand at it — and as you could guess, Mr. Carr is not satisfied merely to repeat the old tale with minor variations. No, indeed! Mr. Carr does it the hard way! Whereas in all the old versions the daughter is simply the victim of a grand-scale conspiracy — with everybody in the hotel lying about the existence of the mother — in Mr. Carr's treatment the witness who maintains there never was a "mother" is TELLING THE TRUTH!

Happy concentrating, fans! Mr. Carr won't let you down. His solution is the answer to a jaded addict's prayer!

"Cabin B-13" is one of John Dickson Carr's radio stories written originally for that excellent series, broadcast by CBS, called "Suspense."

CABIN B-13

by JOHN DICKSON CARR

The Characters

RICHARD BREWSTER . . . . . *the groom*
ANNE BREWSTER . . . . . *the bride*
DR. PAUL HARDWICK . . . . . *the ship's Doctor*
MR. MARSHALL . . . . . *the ship's Second Officer*
CAPTAIN WAINWRIGHT . . . . . *the ship's Captain*
Stewardess, ship's crew, etc.

NARRATOR: Come, now — in happier peace-time days — to a great ocean-liner on the night of her departure for Europe. There she is at the West Twenty-Second Street pier: the twenty-five-thousand-ton *Maurevania*, of the White Planet Line. Smoke from her three funnels coils up lazily in mild October air. You can see the decks, white and shiny like shoeboxes; and the string of lights along them; and the band standing by on A Deck to "play her

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out." You can hear the murmur of an excited crowd and the rattle of steam-winches as cargo is lowered into the hold. You can see the bustle of activity, and the Second Officer standing at the head of the gang-plank, as two rather late passengers hurry through the customs shed towards that gang plank, and . . .

(RICHARD BREWSTER *is thirty-five, with a pleasant, assured but rather worried manner. His wife,* ANNE BREWSTER, *is in her late twenties, and clearly under some emotional strain.*)

ANNE: (*Breathlessly*) It's all right, Ricky! We're *not* too late!

RICHARD: No, Anne. I thought we'd be in time.

ANNE: (*Dreaming*) A honeymoon in Europe! Three whole months with nothing to worry about!

RICHARD: (*Gently*) That's right, dear. And you've been my wife for — let's see — practically five hours now.

ANNE: We did decide to get married rather quickly, didn't we?

RICHARD: So quickly, Anne, that we have to travel on our own passports instead of a husband-and-wife one. (*Amused*) I hope they don't think you're not an honest woman.

ANNE: (*With a flash of gaiety*) I'm going to act like a complete wanton, just to devil you! What about our tickets? Do we give them to that officer standing at the top of the gangplank?

RICHARD: No. Keep your ticket. The cabin steward will come around and collect it after we're under way.

ANNE: And . . . the money, Ricky?

RICHARD: (*Worried*) It's a lot of money, Anne. Twenty thousand dollars in cash. Maybe I'd better turn it in at the purser's office for safe-keeping.

ANNE: Yes. Maybe you had. I . . . (*groping*) . . . Do you mind if we stand here for a second, before we go up the gang-plank?

RICHARD: (*Quickly, concerned*) What's the matter? You're not ill, are you?

ANNE: No. But — getting over brain-fever isn't any joke.

RICHARD: I know, dear.

ANNE: You see, I ought to be eager and excited. Like all those people up there. But I get fancies. Queer, sick fancies. All I can think of is the night, and the wind, and all the black water in the dark.

RICHARD: (*Sharply*) That's exactly the kind of morbid fancy I'm trying to cure you of!

ANNE: I know, Ricky. I — I'll be good. Which way do we go?

RICHARD: Up the gang-plank, through that door there, then down in the

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elevator to B Deck. And no more horrors, do you understand? (*Music up.*)

RICHARD: Here we are, Anne. B Deck, and Cabin Number . . . Good Lord! B-Thirteen!

ANNE: B-Thirteen!

RICHARD: (*Uneasily*) You're not superstitious, are you?

ANNE: No, dear. Not about things like that. Open the door.

RICHARD: Here we are. (*Door opens*) Lights on, and . . .

ANNE: (*Delighted*) Ricky! It's a *beautiful* cabin!

RICHARD: Best I could get, dear. They've got our luggage in, anyway. (*Mock Solemnity*) And over there, madam, you'll find a basket of fruit and some books from your obedient servant.

ANNE: You *are* nice to me, Ricky! (*Bursting out*) And I'm such a *miserable* little devil!

RICHARD: (*Gently*) You're nothing of the kind, darling. But you'll not find any detective novels among those books. Detective stories may be all right for presidents and college professors; but they're straight poison to *you*.

ANNE: I keep thinking and *thinking* about one.

RICHARD: Now, Anne —

ANNE: It's an old one. You probably know it. But it was new to me. A woman and her daughter arrive in Paris, and go to a hotel . . .

RICHARD: You mean the old Paris Exposition story?

ANNE: That's it! The daughter goes out. When she returns, her mother has disappeared and even the hotel room isn't the same. The proprietor of the hotel swears the girl came there alone, and that there never *was* any mother. The girl goes to the police, and *they* won't believe her. Of course, it turns out that the mother has caught bubonic plague and died, and they're hushing it up so that visitors won't keep away from the city. But . . .

RICHARD: You've got to stop this kind of talk, Anne!

ANNE: I know. But imagine being in a position like that! With all those queer eyes staring at you! Wondering if you'd lost your reason! Wondering if your brain had cracked, and the whole world might dissolve, and . . . listen! (*The noise of a hollow, brassy gong.*)

VOICE: All ashore that's going ashore! All ashore that's going ashore!

RICHARD: That's the last call, Anne. We'll be under way any minute.

ANNE: You know, Ricky, I *would* like to see the skyline go past. And the Statue of Liberty, and the rest of it.

RICHARD: Then why not go up and see it? I've got to deposit this

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money in the purser's office on C Deck.

ANNE: I . . . I don't like to leave you!

RICHARD: Now look here, my dear. You don't think *I'm* going to disappear, do you?

ANNE: I suppose I don't, really. When I get these ideas — and I can't help it, Ricky! — I wish you'd kick me!

RICHARD: I'm not going to kick you, Anne; but we've got to find *some* way out of this! *You* certainly won't disappear, in a crowded ship with any number of people around you. As for me, I'd defy Houdini himself to make *me* vanish. . . .

ANNE: Don't *talk* like that!

RICHARD: . . . and I hereby challenge any attendant magician to do it. Run along, dear. I'll join you on deck as soon as I can.

ANNE: All right, Ricky. I'll be good. (*Music up. It fades to the murmur of an excited crowd, as though lining the rail of a ship.*)

MAN'S VOICE: In with your gang-plank! In with your gang-plank!

SECOND VOICE: Gang-plank in, sir!

MAN'S VOICE: Close the rails! Stand by!

ANNE: (*Muttering*) Eager people! Excited people! Happy people! Crowding up to the rail to wave good-bye! Nothing to worry about! Nothing on their minds except . . . (DR. PAUL HARDWICK *speaks. He might be any age between thirty and forty; he has the gentle manner of the philosopher rather than the man of action.*)

HARDWICK: Except seasickness, madam?

ANNE: Oh!

HARDWICK: I *beg* your pardon! I hadn't meant to startle you, believe me!

ANNE: Please don't mention it. It was my own fault. I — I haven't been very well.

HARDWICK: (*Gravely*) I noticed it, madam, if you'll forgive me. That was why I spoke to you. As you see by my uniform, I am the ship's doctor — Dr. Paul Hardwick, at your service.

ANNE: I'm Mrs. Brewster, Doctor. Anne Brewster. When does the ship go?

HARDWICK: In a few seconds, Mrs. Brewster, you'll hear the whistle. Then the band will strike up "Auld Lang Syne." (*Two blasts on a loud ship's whistle.*)

ANNE: We're moving, aren't we?

HARDWICK: Yes. This isn't your first crossing, Mrs. Brewster?

ANNE: I'm afraid it is, Dr. Hardwick. My husband's crossed many times, he tells me. But not in this ship.

HARDWICK: Then I hope you're a good sailor.

ANNE: Why, Dr. Hardwick?

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HARDWICK: Because we'll run into some very dirty weather, once we're out at sea. October is a bad month for travelling.

ANNE: If I do get seasick, Doctor, I'll rush straight to you. And I'll expect to be cured.

HARDWICK: I'll do my best, Mrs. Brewster. How do you like the *Maurevania*?

ANNE: It's a magnificent ship, from what I've seen of it. And they've given us a very nice cabin down on B Deck. B-Thirteen. (*Pause, then sharply*) What's the matter? Why are you looking at me like that?

HARDWICK: I beg your pardon. Did you say . . . B-Thirteen?

ANNE: Yes, of course! Why not!

HARDWICK: You're quite sure of that, Mrs. Brewster?

ANNE: Yes, of course, I'm sure of it! I saw the number on the door. Why not?

HARDWICK: (*Slowly*) Because . . .

ANNE: Go on, Dr. Hardwick!

HARDWICK: Because there's no such cabin aboard this ship!
(*Pause.*)

HARDWICK: I'm not joking, Mrs. Brewster. Some people are superstitious. Many ships, like this one, omit number thirteen on each deck. You *must* have been mistaken!

ANNE (*Fiercely*) What are you trying to tell me? Do you think I saw something that wasn't there?

HARDWICK: Not at all! I only . . .

ANNE: Then come along with me, and I'll show you! I'll *prove* to you there's a number thirteen! *Will* you come along?

HARDWICK: (*Slowly*) Yes, Mrs. Brewster. I think perhaps . . . I had better *escort* you.
(*Music up.*)

ANNE: (*Calling*) Stewardess! Stewardess!

STEWARDESS: Yes, miss! Yes, ma'am! Coming straightaway!

ANNE: (*Desperately*) Tell me, stewardess. This *is* B Deck isn't it?

STEWARDESS: (*Puzzled*) B Deck, ma'am? Yes, ma'am. No doubt about *that*.

ANNE: Dr. Hardwick and I have been all over this part of the ship, looking for cabin number thirteen. But . . .

HARDWICK: Will you please tell this lady, stewardess, that there's no cabin number thirteen on this ship?

STEWARDESS: (*Earnestly*) There sure-to-'eaven isn't, ma'am! And never 'as been. I've served aboard the *Maurevania* a matter of eight years, and I ought to know.

ANNE: But, I tell you, I saw it! I was in there! A big cabin, with a private bathroom attached. The walls were panelled in light oak; the furniture was rosewood and

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yellow satin; and the portholes were like real windows!

STEWARDESS: (*Dubiously*) That's not much good, ma'am.

HARDWICK: No, I'm afraid not. Most of the cabins look like that. What name was the cabin booked in?

ANNE: Brewster, naturally! Mr. and Mrs. Richard E. Brewster.

STEWARDESS: There's no Brewster on my list, ma'am.

ANNE: I tell you, I was *in* there! They'd even delivered the luggage! I saw it!

STEWARDESS: (*Still more bewildered*) Excuse me, ma'am. But I had a look-see in all the cabins I'm in charge of, just to see if the passengers wanted anything. And *I* don't remember any luggage with a "Brewster" label on it!

ANNE: (*Sharply*) Wait a minute! There may be a simple explanation of this!

HARDWICK: That's better, Mrs. Brewster. I was hoping you might find one.

ANNE: Ricky — that's my husband — Ricky and I have only been married a very short time. When my maid printed the baggage labels, she may have made them out in my maiden name. I never noticed at the time.

STEWARDESS: Oh? And what name might *that* be, ma'am?

ANNE: Thornton. Anne Thornton.

STEWARDESS: (*Heartily, relieved*) Lord, miss, why couldn't you 'a' said that before! I remember it well! Two suitcases and a little trunk! They're in B-Sixteen.

ANNE: And where's B-Sixteen.

STEWARDESS: Right behind you, miss. You're standing in front of the door.

ANNE: But what about my husband's luggage?

STEWARDESS: There's no gentleman's luggage in that cabin, miss.

ANNE: (*Crying out*) Where's Ricky? What have you done with Ricky?

HARDWICK: Please, Mrs. Brewster! Be quiet! There's one easy way to settle this.

ANNE: Settle it? How?

HARDWICK: Look down the corridor. You notice the man coming towards us — the man with the two gold stripes round the sleeve?

ANNE: Well?

HARDWICK: That's Mr. Marshall, our Second Officer. Did you ever see him before?

ANNE: (*Excitedly*) Yes, of course I have! He was standing at the top of the gang-plank when Ricky and I got aboard!

HARDWICK: Then he may be able to tell us something. (*Calling*) Mr. Marshall! Mr. Marshall!

MARSHALL: Yes, Doctor? What's up?

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HARDWICK: Take a good look at this young lady. Have you seen her before?

MARSHALL: Seen her before? As a bloke once said to me at a pub in New York, I should hope to kiss a pig I have! Any passenger as pretty as she is gets special attention from the old Marshall eye.

HARDWICK: You saw her come aboard tonight?

MARSHALL: Yes! Certainly!

HARDWICK: (*Casually*) And, of course, you saw the gentleman who was with her?

MARSHALL: (*Puzzled*) The . . . gentleman who was with her?

ANNE: (*Wildly*) YES! Yes!

MARSHALL: But there was nobody with her. (*Pause.*)

HARDWICK: You're quite certain of that, Mr. Marshall?

MARSHALL: My dear doctor, she was the last of 'em to come aboard. And I'll take my Bible oath there was no other passenger with her. Or ahead of her or behind her, if it comes to that!

ANNE: *Why are you lying to me? All of you?*

HARDWICK: Please, Mrs. Brewster! Lower your voice!

ANNE: I know what this is. It's the old Paris trick. But you won't get away with it, do you hear? I'll go to the purser. I'll go to the captain. I'll . . . (*Breaking off, almost in tears*) Dear Father in Heaven, won't *anybody* believe me?

(*Music up.*)

NARRATOR: Later that night the S.S. *Maurevania* is battling a head-wind twenty miles off Ambrose Light. You can feel the long balloon-surge of the deck underneath; then the crest of the wave; then the sudden downward plunge, with a queasiness rising in your stomach, and the crash and hiss of water across fo-c-sle-head and forward hatches. In the Captain's room, just abaft the bridge, there is a conference of ships' officers. Outside, stung by spray, clinging to the bulkhead-rail in the dark, a frightened girl waits until the door to the Captain's room opens and . . . (*Door opens.*)

ANNE: Dr. Hardwick!

HARDWICK: You can come in now, Mrs. Brewster. The Captain will see you.

ANNE: Does *he* believe me?

HARDWICK: Better hold tight to that bulkhead-rail, Mrs. Brewster. We're pitching rather badly. Easy!

ANNE: I'm all right, Doctor. Which one is the Captain?

HARDWICK: That stout, red-faced man sitting behind the desk.

ANNE: What's his name?

HARDWICK: Captain Wainwright. Just tell your story straight-

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forwardly and don't excite yourself. (CAPTAIN WAINWRIGHT *is elderly, with a deep, gruff, slow speaking voice. He is not unkindly, but just now he is harassed almost beyond endurance.*)

WAINWRIGHT: Will you bring the young lady in, Dr. Hardwick, and close the door?

HARDWICK: Yes, sir. Here we are. (*Door closes.*)

WAINWRIGHT: Then maybe we can get to some decision in this matter. Will you sit down beside my desk, Miss Thornton?

ANNE: My name is Brewster, Captain — Mrs. Anne Brewster.

WAINWRIGHT: (*Resigned*) Whatever you say, Mrs. Brewster! Now I might tell you, ma'am, that I've got a lot on my mind already. The First Officer comes aboard with an attack of flu; I'm facing an equinoctial gale short-handed; and now *this* has to happen!

ANNE: I can't help that, Captain. I want to know what they've done with Ricky!

WAINWRIGHT: Just one moment, please, while I get this straight. By this time, I understand, you yourself have personally interviewed every single passenger aboard this ship. Is that true?

ANNE: Yes, it's true.

WAINWRIGHT: But your alleged husband is not here. Is *that* true?

ANNE: (*Desperately*) Yes! That's true! But . . .

WAINWRIGHT: In the meantime the purser has sent a squad of men to search this ship. They've searched every inch of it — you can take my word for that. And there's nobody hidden. Your husband's not here. According to Mr. Marshall, who's standing over there . . .

ANNE: (*Grimly*) I see him.

WAINWRIGHT: According to Mr. Marshall, he never *was* here!

MARSHALL: (*Uneasily*) Hang it all, Miss Thornton, you needn't glare at me like that! I couldn't see the chap if he wasn't there — could I?

WAINWRIGHT: Be quiet, Mr. Marshall!

MARSHALL: Yes, sir. Sorry, sir.

WAINWRIGHT: (*Remonstrating*) I'm not unreasonable, Mrs. Brewster. I think you'll admit that. But what can I do? What can I say? Can you offer any proof that this "husband" ever existed?

ANNE: Yes, of course I can! I . . . I . . .

HARDWICK: Excuse me for interrupting, but would you mind, Captain, if *I* asked a question or two?

WAINWRIGHT: No, Doctor. Go ahead. I tell you, I'm going batty myself!

HARDWICK: If you were married, Mrs. Brewster, you must be carry-

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ing a joint husband-and-wife passport. Where is it?

ANNE: There wasn't *time* to get one! We each carried our own passport!

HARDWICK: I see. Still, there must be someone back in America who can confirm what you say, if we got in touch by radio telephone? Your parents, for instance?

ANNE: I haven't any parents. They're dead.

HARDWICK: What about relatives, then? Or a guardian?

ANNE: My "guardian" is a Trust Company. The administrators don't know I'm married.

HARDWICK: But somebody must have performed the marriage ceremony! A parson? A justice of the peace?

ANNE: Yes, of course. But — I don't remember the name of the town.

WAINWRIGHT: (*Staggered*) You don't remember the name of the town?

HARDWICK: (*Quickly*) Hold tight to your chair, Mrs. Brewster! This ship's going to pitch again!

WAINWRIGHT: (*Sharply*) How's the glass looking, Mr. Marshall?

MARSHALL: Barometer's rising, sir. This weather won't hold long. But we shall be into fog before morning.

WAINWRIGHT: We're in a fog now, if you ask *me*. This lady says . . .

ANNE: It was a little town in upstate New York, where they can marry you at a moment's notice. Ricky kept the certificate. I — I was confused. I haven't been well. Ricky had been away, and he came back, and I was in love with him, and he sort of swept me off my feet, and . . . (*Despairingly*) . . . Oh, what's the use?

WAINWRIGHT: (*Soothingly*) If you'll take my advice, ma'am, you'll go below to your cabin and get some sleep. The doctor can mix you a sedative, and . . .

ANN: (*Fiercely*) You think I'm crazy, don't you?

WAINWRIGHT: I think you're a little overwrought, ma'am.

ANN: (*Groping*) What I can't understand is *why* you should play such a filthy trick! It can't be the bubonic plague *this* time!

WAINWRIGHT: (*Startled*) Bubonic plague, ma'am? Who said anything about the bubonic plague?

ANNE: Never mind. You're all against me — except maybe the doctor. But I'll show you! I'll prove it to you! I *am* going downstairs, and I don't want anybody to follow me. Good night, all of you! (*Door opens and closes.*)

MARSHALL: (*With relief*) Wow! I'm glad *that's* over!

WAINWRIGHT: (*Worried*) Look here, Mr. Marshall. Do you think it's quite safe to trust her out there alone?

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MARSHALL: I dunno, sir. She's as mad as a hatter, if you ask *me*.

WAINWRIGHT: You think she might . . . do something foolish?

MARSHALL: I think she might chuck herself overboard, if we're not very careful.

WAINWRIGHT: What's your opinion, Doctor?

HARDWICK: I can give you my opinion, gentlemen, in a very few words. (*Calmly*) That girl is as sane as you are. (WAINWRIGHT *and* MARSHALL *exclaim in protest.*)

HARDWICK: Wait! Hear what I have to say! I shared your own belief, at first. But I've been talking to her all evening. I've heard the whole story. And there's not a psychopathic trait in her nature. She firmly believes in this husband.

MARSHALL: Yes, Doctor; and a lot of people firmly believe they're Napoleon. But they get stuck in loony-bins just the same.

HARDWICK: This matter is not precisely a joke, Mr. Marshall. I tell you this man exists — or did exist.

WAINWRIGHT: What do you mean, Doctor, *did* exist?

HARDWICK: Suppose he's been murdered and thrown overboard?

WAINWRIGHT: Murdered and thrown overboard? Why?

HARDWICK: If you remember, Richard Brewster was carrying a very large sum of money in cash: his wife's wedding-gift and practically all her inheritance. He meant to go to the purser's office. But perhaps he never got there. That money might have been a great temptation to . . .

WAINWRIGHT: (*Sharply*) To whom?

HARDWICK: To a stewardess — or even (*Thoughtfully*) to a ship's officer.

WAINWRIGHT: Exactly what are you getting at?

HARDWICK: Numbers on doors can be changed easily enough. Just print a small card and put it in the metal slot on the door.

WAINWRIGHT: I still want to know what . . .

HARDWICK: If you use your intelligence, gentlemen, I think you can figure out how a man can be made to vanish into thin air — and why Mr. Marshall saw no other passenger!

(*Music up.*)

NARRATOR: Four o'clock in the morning — the hour of suicides and bad dreams. The gale has subsided; the sea is calm. But the S.S. *Maurevania* creeps blindly at barely eight knots, through a thick and strangling fog. The whole ship is dark, and sealed up in sleep. There is no sound in all that mournful dimness, except . . . (*Two hoarse blasts on fog-*

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horn) . . . except when the foghorn cries out a warning overhead. Even Cabin B-Sixteen is dark. Anne Brewster, still fully dressed, lies in an uneasy doze across one of the berths, her head almost touching the inter-cabin telephone, when . . . (*Phone rings.*)

ANNE: (*Starting*) What was —? I thought I heard —? (*Phone rings again.*)

ANNE: (*Shivering*) The telephone! Yes? Hello? (*Richard's voice speaks.*)

RICHARD: It's me, Anne. (*Warningly*) Take it easy, now!

ANNE: (*Crying out*) *Ricky!* Where are you?

RICHARD: Sh-h! Keep your voice down!

ANNE: What happened to you, Ricky? Are you hurt?

RICHARD: No, I'm not hurt. But — he nearly got me.

ANNE: *Who* nearly got you?

RICHARD: Listen, dear. I can't explain over the phone, and I don't dare come down to you. Can you meet me up on deck?

ANNE: Yes, of course! Where?

RICHARD: Do you know the boat-deck?

ANNE: Which one is that?

RICHARD: The top deck, where all the lifeboats are slung.

ANNE: Yes! I know it.

RICHARD: Go to the starboard side — that's the right-hand side facing forward — and find the fourth lifeboat from the aft companionway. There's a thick fog and nobody will see us.

ANNE: I'll be right there!

(*Music up.*)

ANNE: (*Whispering*) This is the boat-deck, unless I've completely lost my bearings. You can just barely see the shapes of the lifeboats. One . . . two . . . three . . .

RICHARD: Anne! Is that you?

ANNE: Yes, Ricky! Where are you?

RICHARD: Here! Duck your head under the lifeboat and take my hand!

ANNE: But isn't it horribly dangerous out there on the edge? With no railing along the ship's side?

RICHARD: Don't worry, Anne. I won't let you fall.

ANNE: (*Bursting out*) Ricky, put your arms around me! I've been so frightened and miserable I almost did throw myself over the side.

RICHARD: Look out!

ANNE: (*Gasping*) You — you caught me just in time, Ricky.

RICHARD: I'll say I did! What did you trip over?

ANNE: There's a big piece of iron grating, with a rope through it, lying on the deck. In this fog . . .

RICHARD: It would be fatal if either of us fell overboard now. We're well aft, near the propellers. The suction would carry us into the

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propeller-blades, and . . . Listen!

ANNE: I can't hear anything except the fog-horn.

RICHARD: But *I* can. There's someone walking along the deck. And I can see a flashlight moving in the fog.

HARDWICK: You're quite right, my friend. You *can* see a flashlight.

ANNE: Dr. Hardwick! What are *you* doing here?

HARDWICK: At the moment I am covering both of you with a revolver. Please don't move.

ANNE: So you *were* in the conspiracy, Dr. Hardwick!

HARDWICK: What conspiracy?

ANNE: The whole ship's conspiracy to say Richard Brewster didn't exist!

HARDWICK: My dear young lady, you can set your mind at rest. There never was any ship's conspiracy against you. The people you spoke to were *perfectly honest.*

ANNE: (*Sarcastic*) Including Mr. Marshall, I suppose?

HARDWICK: Yes. Including Marshall.

ANNE: He was telling the truth when he said nobody came up the gang-plank with me — or before or after me?

HARDWICK: That was not what Marshall said. He said no *passenger* came up the gang-plank then.

ANNE: (*Bewildered*) What's the difference?

HARDWICK: A great crime has been arranged for tonight, young lady. Not less than the crime of murder.

ANNE: Murder? Who's going to be murdered?

HARDWICK: You.

ANNE: *What?*

HARDWICK: That, I repeat, is what has been arranged. But there is no conspiracy. There is only one criminal.

ANNE: And who is the criminal?

HARDWICK: The criminal is that man standing beside you. Your so-called "husband." (*Pause.*)

ANNE: Dr. Hardwick! Do you know what you're saying?

HARDWICK: Yes. Marshall, of course, did see *someone* walk up the gang-plank — loitering behind you. But he never dreamed of associating that person in any way with *you.* The person Marshall saw was . . . Well? Have you guessed it?

ANNE: No.

HARDWICK: He saw a ship's officer, returning from shore-leave in civilian clothes.

ANNE: A ship's officer?

HARDWICK: Yes. That man's name isn't "Richard Brewster." His real name is Blaney, and he's the First Officer of the *Maurevania.*

ANNE: Are you trying to tell me? . . .

HARDWICK: The Captain can identify him. He's actually British,

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though he can fake an American accent very well. He's already got a wife in England, and he's planning to join her with the twenty thousand dollars he got from *you*.

ANNE: I don't believe this! (*Desperately*) Ricky! Why don't you say something?

HARDWICK: He planned it very cleverly, I admit. He never let you know he was a ship's officer. He'd been away for some time — naturally! He persuaded you to marry him in a hurry — naturally!

ANNE: Ricky, *is this true?*

HARDWICK: He had the money, you see. All he did was hang a dummy number on the cabin door, remove it later, put on his uniform, and walk away with his own luggage.

ANNE: Wait! I remember! Captain Wainwright told us the First Officer came aboard tonight . . .

HARDWICK: With a bad attack of flu. Yes. Our friend couldn't be seen in public until after he'd disposed of *you*. The best thing was to convince everybody you were insane — as he nearly did. Then, when you went overboard tonight . . .

ANNE: They would all believe it was suicide?

HARDWICK: Exactly. But I suspected this "Brewster" from the beginning because he told such an obvious lie. You quoted him as saying he had never travelled on the *Maurevania*. Yet he could direct you all over the ship, and even knew where the purser's office was.

ANNE: (*Screaming*) Look out, Dr. Hardwick!

HARDWICK: What's wrong?

ANNE: He's got a piece of iron grating that must weigh fifty pounds. He's lifting it to throw . . .

HARDWICK: Put it down, you fool! Put it . . . (*A cry and a heavy splash.*)

ANNE: He jumped overboard!

HARDWICK: That was the weight he was going to use in sinking *your* body.

ANNE: But they'll pick him up, won't they? They'll stop the ship, and . . . (*Screams, loud and frantic, then choked away as though bubbling under water.*)

HARDWICK: What's that?

ANNE: (*Realizing*) The propellers! The ship's propellers!

HARDWICK: They have sharp blades, Miss Thornton.

ANNE: I can't stand this!

HARDWICK: It won't be easy, I know. But that cold-blooded swine planned a crime in the fourth dimension which for you would have been death in the fourth dimension. Believe me, my dear, it is better this way. . . . (*Music up.*)

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— Continued from other side)

hough the identity card in her purse bore that ıame. Even though all her personal possessions were monogrammed "S.C."! And she *knew* she WASN'T nsane — despite frequent mysterious attempts to DRIVE her mad. But she realized that if she didn't scape from this maddening terror soon, she actually WOULD become the person the evil "woman in ed" *wanted* her to be — a half-wit named Sheila Campbell!

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Suppose YOU were Julia Ross. What would YOU do if "the woman in red" claimed you were her half-witted niece of another name . . . and you yourself coudn't prove you WEREN'T!

WHAT happened to Julia Ross could happen to anybody . . . to YOU! Only twenty-four hours earlier, she had been just a penniless, unemployed Nobody — without a friend or enemy to her name! Now, suddenly and without warning, she had been made the victim of an inhuman plot to destroy her identity, her sanity . . . even her life!

WHY had the sinister "woman in red" been so pleased in hiring a personal secretary who had *no* friends, *no* relatives? *Was it because she wanted a girl whom no one would miss if she should suddenly vanish?* WHY had she been brought *here* — to this heavily shuttered house? *Why was "the woman in red" telling everyone that the girl locked in the upstairs room was her feeble-minded niece, Sheila Campbell?*

Julia knew she WASNT Sheila Campbell. Even though they CALLED her by that name. Even

(Continued on other side —)

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